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DECEMBER 17, 2007

The American Conservative

STORMING New Hampshire

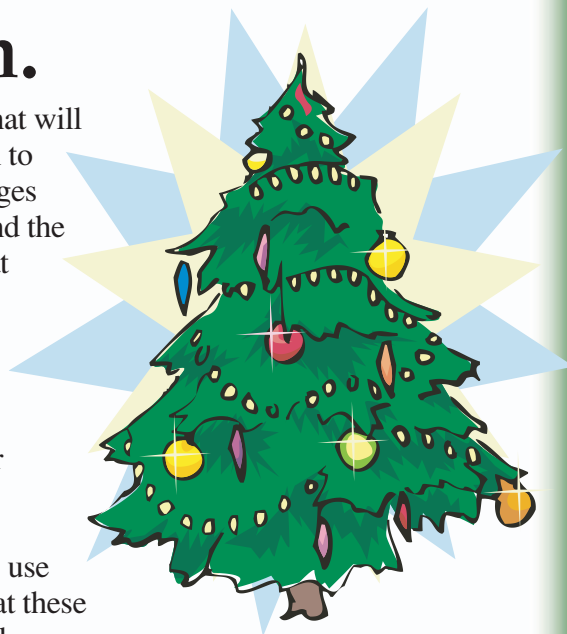


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Storming New Hampshire

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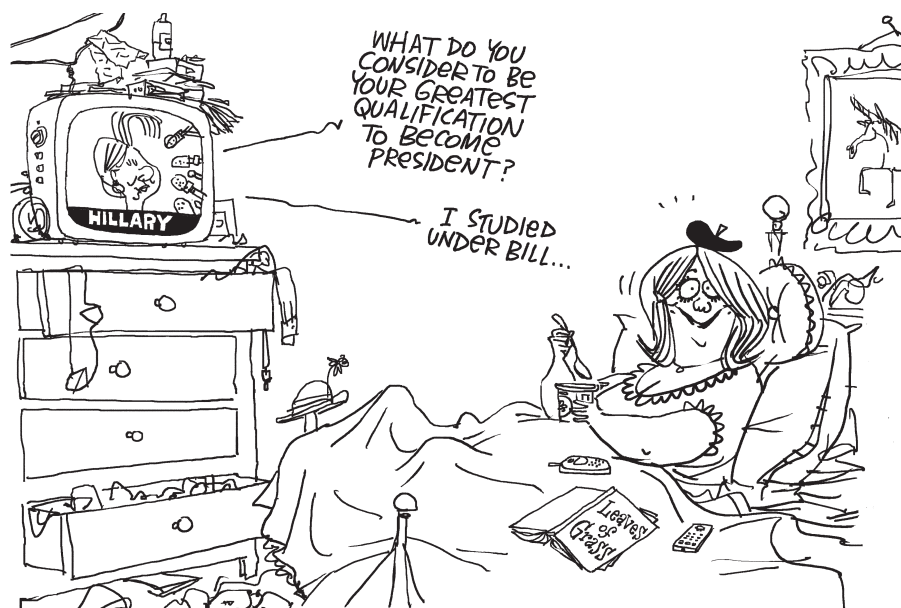
[PEACE]

AFTER ANNAPOLIS

Most everyone knows the rough contours of a viable settlement: a Palestinian state east of Israel's 1967 borders and in Gaza, with some one-for-one territorial swaps and resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue that does not involve them overwhelming Israel by returning en masse to their ancestral homes. For the Israelis, full recognition of their legitimate place in the region and an opportunity to peacefully integrate into it. For the Palestinians, a fully sovereign homeland, stripped of Israeli military checkpoints and barriers to normal life. The whole Israeli settler enterprise—which empowers the most fanatical to seize Palestinian land and water—would have to come to an end. So would the Arab fantasy of driving the “Zionist entity” into the sea. Neither the settlers nor the Arab rejectionists are marginal parts of their own societies, but they aren't the majority in either. Positive developments on the ground could work toward marginalizing both.

It's that simple—and that complicated. To the surprise of many, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, politically weak in Israel, is pushing the peace process forward and has found in Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas a sensible and practical partner. Abbas's writ now extends scarcely beyond the West Bank town of Ramallah, so it is likely that neither leader really speaks for his people. But progress toward peace could change that. Condoleezza Rice deserves praise for assembling Israeli, Palestinian, and other Arab representatives in Annapolis and for trying to lay down tracks to move the long neglected negotiations forward.

Of course, the obstacles are enormous: Iran and much of the Arab world oppose a peace settlement, as do the neo-conservatives and Christian Zionists in Bush's own coalition, not to mention the



Israeli Right. The odds against success are formidable, but not insurmountable. Hamas, formally rejectionist, represents a suffering and besieged population in Gaza that would benefit enormously from a settlement. If the process quickly yielded concrete benefits to the Palestinians of the West Bank, those who dwell in Gaza would clamor to be included.

The alternatives are dispiriting. Palestinian resistance, for decades a largely secular phenomenon, has acquired a fundamentalist and Islamist component. But the Palestinians have not become al-Qaeda-ized—though if their oppression and hopelessness continues, that would seem inevitable. For Israel, the stronger party, a future without peace is hardly rosy: does it really want to police a growing and embittered Palestinian population for another generation? Does it view itself as an embattled crusader state, forever at war with the peoples of its region? Reasonable Israelis reject that course.

[ALLIES]

LOST POODLE

There is surely much to commend in the record of Australian John Howard, who just decisively lost the prime ministership to Laborite Kevin Rudd after 11 years in office. But in the short run at least, his accomplishments were buried by Howard's support of George W. Bush's war in Iraq.

Rudd's victory marks a clean sweep: every elected leader who backed Bush with troops has been rejected by public

opinion or voted from office. Spain, Italy, Poland, the UK, and now Australia.

It was lamented on NRO that Bush was losing one of his “doughty warriors of the Anglosphere,” and if one doesn't take the term “warrior” too literally, that might be true. The final hope among American hawks—that France's Nicolas Sarkozy will step forward to claim the vacant post of Bush's chief ally—seems very misplaced.

Rudd is no leftist. He supports Australia's continued contribution to the war in Afghanistan and generally favors an alliance with the United States. But as America's own election year approaches, the question arises: have voters down under signaled a shift in the political weather away from Bush's America, toward China; from the Right, toward the Left. It's a change that Americans should both worry about and easily understand.

[IRAQ]

TEA AND KEVLAR

Baghdad real estate might not seem like a good investment at the moment, but the U.S. is betting against the market. Our \$592-million embassy, slated to open this fall, boasts a landscaped swimming pool, department store, food court (frozen yogurt comes by armed convoy from Kuwait), 619 blast-resistant apartments, and a 16,000-square foot ambassador's residence. Only 32 percent of Iraqis have potable water, and Baghdad often has electricity fewer than four hours per day. But this 104-acre

sanctuary enjoys its own generators, treatment plants, and—lest the residents realize they aren't in Kansas anymore—a phone network complete with domestic area codes.

In a simpler world, U.S. embassies might be what they claim: bright oases where diplomats stamp visas, serve tea, and model American values to the less enlightened. But the Baghdad embassy, rising even as the city fell around it, is a defensive structure, designed to isolate Americans from the chaos we created. It isn't about outreach but secure occupation. In the words of *Vanity Fair*'s William Langewiesche, "impregnable and pointless."

And expensive. At an annual operating cost of \$1.2 billion—sure to rise since the construction is running \$144 million over budget—we'll pay a high price for maintaining this swanky bunker in the world's worst neighborhood, and it looks like we're planning a very long stay.

[CULTURE]

KEEPIN' IT UNREAL

What is the role of the NAACP? Its latest claim to fame is forcing a high school in Lakota, Ohio to cancel a "racist" play. The work in question: Agatha Christie's popular *Ten Little Indians*. There's no racist content in the text, but the production drew the NAACP's ire because the book was originally published in England as *Ten Little N-----s* back when the word had little social context. The title was changed when the book arrived in America, and for decades the play has been performed as "Ten Little Indians" or "And Then There Were None." It would be good news if school plays based on works with long discarded titles were the worst thing the venerable organization had to worry about.

But the tragic and still mysterious murder of Washington Redskins football star Sean Taylor has highlighted a far

more serious reality. As the *Washington Post* noted in its Taylor editorial, nearly half of America's murder victims are black, the number of black men slain nationwide is on the rise, and the most likely cause of death for an African-American male between the ages of 15 and 35 is homicide. One might think that the country's most respected civil-rights organization might spend its energies addressing this somber fact, but it's easier to cry racism and shut down school plays. Easier, but not more useful.

[SENATE]

HIGHER CALLING

Why sit at a wooden desk in the Senate when you can have a throne on K Street? Senate Minority Whip Trent Lott recently announced his retirement—just in time to avoid a new law that would make him wait two years instead of one to lobby his colleagues. An industry that was once the province of failed congressmen is growing so fast that superstar senators throw away their leadership positions for the lucre lobbying affords.

While Lott decides whether to work for his son's firm, Lott and Associates, or start a new one with former Sen. John Breaux of Patton Boggs, Mississippians may have trouble finding a replacement. Gov. Haley Barbour (a former lobbyist) would normally choose a senior member of the state's House delegation. But Congressman Chip Pickering is already making plans for his own career in persuading public officials. How could he let a little thing like the Senate derail him?

Of course, citizens deserve the chance to be heard in the halls of power, and some lobbyists make that possible. But something is rotten in the Beltway when election to high office is just resume-padding for a career in the influence industry. ■

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[the union's leader]

Storming New Hampshire

Candidates crowd the Granite State, hoping to win big in the nation's first primary.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

OUTSIDE THE RADISSON HOTEL in Manchester, a riot is breaking out. Huge “Hillary” signs barricade half of Elm Street. High-pitched cheers pierce the cold New Hampshire air. Hailing from Mrs. Clinton’s alma mater, Wellesley Students for Clinton had been bused in to greet her husband and the assembled media. Almost all of the Hillary volunteers, staff, and supporters are studious women, occasionally accompanied by young men who aver, “I’m just the boyfriend.” Most have volunteered for previous Hillary events and will come back to the state for more. One young woman in a black turtleneck explains to another, “New Hampshire is everything.”

She’s right. The Granite State’s first-in-the-nation status began in 1920, but took on its unusual importance in 1952, when Dwight Eisenhower defeated Robert Taft for the Republican nomination and Estes Kefauver ended Harry Truman’s bid for a second term. The winner of the primary usually wins the party’s nomination—with some recent exceptions. In 1992, Paul Tsongas narrowly defeated Bill Clinton, whose strong second-place finish earned him the “comeback kid” moniker and set him on the path to the presidency. In 1996, Pat Buchanan beat Bob Dole, and in 2000, John McCain outdrew George W. Bush, due in part to

New Hampshire’s growing plurality of voters registered as Independents.

Some have speculated that the recently tightened and frontloaded primary calendar makes New Hampshire less important. Rudy Giuliani’s campaign told the media this summer that they could practically skip Iowa and New Hampshire and still steamroll the competition in Florida and on the new “Tsunami Tuesday.” But his recent ad buys and frequent visits to the state tell a different story. Every top-tier candidate or a high-level surrogate has a scheduled trip to New Hampshire at least every ten days until the Jan. 8 primary.

Inside the hotel ballroom, Gray Chynoweth, a Manchester lawyer and head of the state’s Young Democrats, warms up the crowd with typical New Hampshire primary patter: “The weather is getting cold, but the politics are just heating up.” Chynoweth explains that his state is home to “the underfunded, the underdogs, and, of course, the comeback kids.” But that’s where his love for the little guy apparently ends. In the practiced rhythm of the young and ambitious, Chynoweth reminds his audience that, as head of the Young Democrats, he “must remain officially neutral. And therefore...” he pauses, “I’m resigning as of Monday to work for Hillary Clinton.” Chynoweth

will serve on Hillary’s National LGBT Steering Committee. The Wellesley girls go wild.

Events where Hillary appears are tightly managed. The music is pumped in from campaign headquarters, no doubt reflecting her preference for centralized planning. But while Hillary stalks through Iowa’s fields to chirpy K.T. Tunstall tunes, Bill improvises in Manchester. As he chats with kitchen staffers, the latest Kanye West single blasts appropriately egomaniacal lyrics, “You should be honored by my lateness / that I would even show up to this fake s--t ... / There’s a thousand of you / there’s only one of me.”

His speech is wonky, empathetic, and delivered without a prepared text. He outlines three problems—inequality, instability, and unsustainability—that should drive the Democratic agenda. He explains Hillary’s advantage over the Republicans in words stolen from the mouths of conservatives: “You cannot be an ideological party in a dynamic world where you need to think.” And while the problems Clinton outlines are global in scope, his proposed solutions strike a nationalist chord: “If we mandate that every roof be greened, you cannot outsource that job to India. You need someone here to green a roof.” On trade, he speaks about lost economic

sovereignty, filching an analogy from Hillary's campaign book: "People ask why we don't enforce our trade laws on India or China. I ask them if they think they could go down to the bank, punch the banker in the face, and still get a loan." The former president has been used sparingly in his wife's campaign, but his presence still electrifies any Democratic crowd. One councilman from New York admits that Hillary "never could turn a room on like this." We can also be sure that Hillary's campaign would never knowingly allow Bill to shake hands with 20-year-old girls while Justin Timberlake sings, "I'm Bringing Sexy Back."

Polls show Hillary up 13 points in the Granite State, but her victory no longer seems like a foregone conclusion. Her small lead in Iowa has disappeared, and her New Hampshire numbers are slipping. Retail politics allow her opponents to counterpunch effectively.

The day after Bill's address in Manchester, Elizabeth Edwards attended a house party in Franconia. About a hundred local Democrats gathered around delicate finger foods while the hostess, Claudia Chase, beamed. Her husband dodged all political questions, ducking in and out of side rooms to fetch chairs, telling guests and reporters alike, "I'm just the husband." Mrs. Edwards asked whether people had heard Clinton's banker analogy in reference to China and India. Many nodded. Elizabeth gently proceeded, "Which candidate, on either side, has received more money from defense contractors? Hillary Clinton. Which candidate has received more money from Big Pharma than any candidate?" Audience members began filling in the blanks. "If you are going to fight them, you can't be in debt to them," Elizabeth explained.

Her make-up and personality are bright, and she commands the room—not with her husband's sympathetic

charisma but with the infectious energy of a supermom. These qualities seem to sharpen her attacks on other candidates. Without breaking her smile, she dismisses Obama as easily as she did Clinton: "You can't just talk about change or hope. You have to do things." Elizabeth outlines how her husband raised all the money for a College for Everyone pilot program in Greene County, North Carolina.

A cynic would say that she makes an ideal attack dog because her well-documented struggle with breast cancer makes it impossible to hit back. That same cynic would also conclude that Edwards's efforts in Greene County are meant to pad a thin political resume. But Mrs. Edwards seems so accessible that all doubt melts. After recounting a story of a woman who whispered into John Edwards's ear at a campaign stop in Iowa about her inability to pay for healthcare, Elizabeth condenses her husband's appeal to one question: "If you had to go and whisper your problems in one candidate's ear, who would you choose?"

Being an early primary state means that New Hampshire is blessed with an influx of out-of-state helpers and long-term activists. In the back of the room, a curly-haired young woman named Charity helps people sign up to be Edwards volunteers. She drove up from Princeton, New Jersey to help organize events and work the campaign phone banks. "This is the first time I've done something like this," she explains. "I read Elizabeth's book, and it felt like she was my friend." While Charity has seen Elizabeth at several stops, she has never seen the candidate himself. She doesn't need to. For her, politics is a mission and she is a pilgrim.

Standing next to her, Jinnel Robinson typifies the other creature of New Hampshire politics: the issue activist. Wearing a purple t-shirt that says, "I'm a

Health Care voter," Robinson is chasing each candidate who comes into her area, signing up their audience members for e-mail blasts from the New Hampshire SEIU and attempting to get digital photographs of herself with the contenders—with her shirt prominently in view. On an "off day," Jinnel still drives nearly 100 miles and attends several events. For her, politics is a job, and she is a prole. Supporting a candidate is a temporary adventure that ends in a final decision—defeat or victory—putting a volunteer out of her misery quickly or rewarding her work. Supporting a cause is usually a thankless task that ends in a dissatisfying compromise. In New Hampshire, you can distinguish issue activists by the blank stare they throw at a candidate or a surrogate—no affection, no fear, just the contempt a worker has for an unreliable but necessary tool.

Later that week, Barack Obama, making his 20th visit to the state, arrives in Manchester for a policy address on public education, given in the small auditorium of Central High School. His staff is riding high: the previous night the campaign sent out a text message to supporters announcing that Obama had surpassed Clinton in Iowa state polls. In New Hampshire, he still trailed by double digits, but was on the rise. His new strategy of attacking Clinton was yielding results, and Obama has reason to hope. Roughly half of New Hampshire residents—despite hundreds of visits by the candidates—have not yet decided which one they support. With just over a month to play, Obama is hitting his stride and aims to convince voters that Hillary is not inevitable. Armed with new polls showing her lead over Republicans nationwide evaporating and a promised campaign tour by Oprah, he has all he needs to pull an upset.

Obama has been credited with giving great stump speeches. More should be said about his skill at retail politics.

Gabrielle Grossman, a resident of Exeter, describes herself as an “Obama groupie.” Her ready smile doesn’t betray the difficulties she faces raising a child with autism. She has been to a few Obama events in the state and was introduced to the Illinois senator. Today, he recognizes her in the crowd, remembers her name, and asks about her son. Grossman is not among the 50 percent who could change their votes. In a mass democracy of over 300 million people, Barack Obama, a potential president, knows Gabrielle Grossman from Exeter by name. The effect on her is just short of a religious experience.

But for all his prowess on the stump and in face-to-face encounters, Obama has a little trouble delivering his policy address. He relies on a teleprompter, and his delivery straddles the line between thoughtful and sleep-inducing. Speaking about poor black and Latino students, he chastises the state and federal governments that have allowed some school buildings in North Carolina to remain unimproved since the 19th century. Then suddenly he makes a connection between crime and education that was absent from the prepared speech and raises his voice, improvising, “When the prisons are newer than the schools...” He pauses, seemingly surprised by his own anger, and returns awkwardly to his speech: “Is it any wonder ... they don’t think their education is important?”

The Republican race is even more fluid. In the first three contests, six candidates stand to make a difference. In the top tier are Mitt Romney, Rudy Giuliani, and the resurgent John McCain. But in Iowa, Mike Huckabee is threatening to overtake them all. In New Hampshire, Ron Paul’s support is nearing double digits in the polls, but seems to be even stronger as measured by the frequency one encounters his supporters on the ground. In South Carolina, Fred

Thompson has the advantage of regional solidarity.

McCain has traversed the state for over 40 days in this primary season, holding dozens of town-hall meetings and relying on the groundwork he laid in 2000. He currently sits 16 points behind frontrunner Romney and is engaged in a fight for second place with Giuliani. He has to rely on legwork, as Romney and Rudy are each buying over a million dollars worth of television ads per week.

In his town-hall format, McCain brings friends like Congressman and fellow Arizonan Jeff Flake and Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman. He jokes acidly about Washington’s dysfunction and introduces his answers with the trademark “I’ve got to give you a little straight talk on this.” In a recent *New York Times* column, David Brooks talked up McCain as the “only great man” running for the presidency. It is probably true—his war service, his time in a P.O.W. camp, his pluck and self-awareness testify to great character. But great men can labor under illusions. McCain repeats over and over that Republicans lost the 2006 elections not because of the unpopularity of the Iraq War but because they lacked fiscal discipline. In New London, McCain’s pledge not to raise taxes is met with lusty applause, but his paeans to budgetary restraint get only polite nods. No one believes him.

Oddly, New Hampshire residents comply with the stagecraft that top-tier campaigns create. McCain scheduled a stop at Jack’s Diner—New London’s claim to fame—before his town hall. Half an hour before he arrived, dozens of residents purchased their coffee and expensive croissant sandwiches and posed as normal customers, while McCain’s advance men stood around the room like sentinels. The senator entered, jerked his aging body around

the joint for a few minutes, and got his photo-op. Fewer than half of the customers/extras intend to vote for him, but none needed direction in his assigned role: Granite Stater caught eating by war hero.

At the town-hall meeting an hour later, one man rises to ask sheepishly, “What would you do about the 12 million or more illegal immigrants?” McCain turns to the makeshift grandstand behind him: “Ladies and gentleman, this meeting is adjourned,” he gargles self-deprecatingly. After explaining that the demise of his comprehensive immigration reform proposal taught him a lesson, he reiterates his support for a comprehensive approach, briefly acknowledges that the American people want border security, then repeats, “I got the message” three times. Remarkably no one stands up and asks, “Why the hell should we believe you? We defeated that thing in 2006, and then you tried it again in 2007, you sonofabitch!” That grumbling is done privately as McCain exits to dutiful applause. New Londoners played their part perfectly.

Some primary voters cast themselves in several acts of a show. At a town hall in Nashua, attorney Richard Florino asks Rudy Giuliani, “What makes liberal Democrats so wrong about the threats this country faces?” He is not a Giuliani campaign plant; he just asks questions as if he is one. The next day at a house party, Florino is called on first again. This time he asks the former mayor to discuss Romney’s failure to live up to Ronald Reagan’s economic record.

Beyond the enthusiastic support of Florino, Giuliani has trouble attracting a crowd. At his first stop in Manchester, Ron Paul and Dennis Kucinich supporters threaten to overwhelm his small following. His weak position in New Hampshire has caused him to change his strategy and attack the frontrunner, Mitt

Romney. "I lead my closest rival in tax-cuts 23-0," he harrumphs in Nashua. Later, in an interview with *The Politico*, he announces that it is time "to take the mask off and take a look at what kind of governor was he."

Giuliani advertises that his candidacy will change what it means to be a Republican. In Nashua, he explains, "People become Republicans because they want low taxes, fiscal discipline, and a strong national defense." There is no mention of the social issues that helped attract millions to the GOP when Democrats

porters belatedly get word that their man, his wife Ann, and some of the grandkids have arrived on the opposite end of Main Street and hustle to meet him. For once in this campaign, Giuliani's take no-prisoners style has foiled Romney's flawless operation.

Romney's campaign is slick, but his support seems shallow. In Iowa, over two thirds who poll in his favor admit that they may change their minds. This uncertainty has fueled Huckabee's rise and threatens to undermine all the work and money Romney has invested in his

tremendous power over the rest of the nation?

Granite Staters take their privilege seriously. Most are too busy to learn the ins and outs of each candidate's policies, though they have a general idea. The voters can easily discern the professionalism of each campaign and have a record of sending the rest of the nation candidates that aren't too embarrassing. (They didn't vote for Dole, remember.) So each national campaign attempts to boil down its candidacy to one personal question. In one instance, it's Governor Huntsman asking on behalf of John McCain, "Whatever your differences on this or that policy, who has the character to lead this nation?" In another, it's Elizabeth Edwards tenderly inquiring, "If you could just whisper your problems into the ear of one candidate, which would you chose?" Gabrielle Grossman, the mother of a special-needs child, asks herself, "Which candidate knows me? Knows about people like me and my son?"

A man from Windham, Chris Sweeney, approaches Romney. He wants a candidate who will bring back the high-paying jobs New Hampshire seems to be losing. He explains to me that he is tired "of everybody being offended by everything. Isn't this a democracy? Can't the majority sometimes have its way?" He also wants someone who will police the southern border. Siding up to the surrounded candidate, Sweeney quietly utters one stoic plea: "Please, help us take back our country."

Holding his granddaughter in one arm and shaking the hand of another supporter, Romney doesn't blink or make eye contact. He just says, "That's what we're tryin' to do," and smiles with his starched white teeth. Sweeney shrugs. He has six weeks to figure out who will restore the places and certainties he once relied on. ■

WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES CITIZENS OF THE REPUBLIC WANT TO **SEE THEIR FUTURE COMMANDER IN CHIEF BAG GROCERIES** IN CONCORD OR **EAT CLAM CHOWDER** IN NORTH CONWAY?

embraced amnesty, acid and abortion. Giuliani promises "to stay on the offense" both in what he calls "The Terrorists' War on Us" and by advocating pro-growth policies for the American economy. His tough-guy persona has attracted a certain type of nationalist Republican voter. In the back of the room, Tex, a Bush supporter in 2000, admires him from a distance: "Giuliani has balls, and right now, that's important."

The clash between the Romney and Giuliani campaigns threatened to spill into the streets of Nashua. In honor of its annual Holiday Stoll, the city's main street was closed to cars and both campaigns scheduled a walk within 15 minutes of each other. Beginning on the north end of Main Street, Rudy and his entourage barrels through, stopping for the mayor to get a slice of "Sopranos' New York Style Pizza."

Meanwhile, Romney's supporters muster on the south end, awaiting the arrival of their candidate. Suddenly, Giuliani's busses pull up and block Romney's planned entrance. Mitt sup-

early state strategy. He has bet on Iowa, New Hampshire, and Michigan to rocket him past Giuliani in the national polls before the Feb. 5 Super Tuesday. If Romney wins in squeakers, the media will prepare the way for Giuliani or another candidate to surpass him. But Romney's state director is optimistic, believing that the "party of family values" won't fail to distinguish between Romney and his opponents. Strolling through Nashua, even rival campaign supporters comment on how "wholesome" Romney's campaign looked compared to Rudy's aggressive sprint through town.

To an outsider, the New Hampshire primary seems like an insane process for choosing the man or woman who will lead the free world. What is it that makes citizens of the Republic want to see their future commander in chief bag groceries in Concord or eat clam chowder in North Conway? Why should a state of just over a million mostly white affluent folks in corduroy and jewel-colored sweaters wield such

[cuba libre]

Castro's Enabler

It's Soviet sponsor long gone, Cuba is short on communists but stunted by poverty. Is it time to end the embargo?

By Fred Reed

ON HAVANA'S MALECÓN, the seawall that parallels the shore, the waves roll in and hit the sudden obstacle, sending towering explosions of bright white spray far into the air, occasionally soaking the unwary pedestrian. Across the highway that follows the malecón is a cheap open-air restaurant, the DiMar. A steady breeze from the sea pours across the tables. A tolerable shrimp cocktail, topped with mayonnaise, costs a few bucks. On a couple of evenings, I drank a beer there, watching Cuba go by. It wasn't what I had expected.

Unlike many gringo tourists, I was legal, having gotten a license from the Treasury Department. Without one, travel to Cuba is illegal under the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917. Why Cuba was my enemy wasn't clear to me. Nor was it to the Cubans.

I had inadvertently neglected to tell the authorities that I was a journalist—I hate it when that happens—so I was not in a position to ask probing questions of officials. But then I didn't want official twaddle. I wanted to wander, take cabs down the coast, just look at things. And I did.

I was pleased to find the old part of Havana both charming and reasonably well preserved, especially around the Convent of San Francisco. It is, of course, a museum now, as God knows

we mustn't be religious, but it is in good shape and breathes a moody solemnity. I tried to imagine the stillness in times before the motorcycle. The narrow lanes around it were closed to cars, making it pleasant to walk among the shops.

The country is poor, run down, and itself almost a museum. Sitting in the DiMar is like visiting the Fifties. The American embargo makes it hard to get new cars, so many Cubans still drive models from 1959, the year of the revolution, and before. Some sport jazzy paint jobs, and others don't. It was remarkable to watch the rides of my adolescence go by, charting them mentally as one did in 1964—'54 Merc, '57 Caddy, '56 Chevy. Around me the other customers, downscale Cubans in all shades of nonwhite, laughed and chatted.

They are an accommodating people. On my arrival, they spoke a truncated Spanish hard to understand—*Cómo etáh uteh? Ma o menoh.*—but they made an intense national effort to improve their clarity, and by my fourth day, they were comprehensible.

Cuba doesn't fit its sordid image. It is most assuredly a dictatorship, yet the police presence is much less than that of Washington, and such cops as I saw had no interest in me. It is not regimented.

Havana does not feel oppressed, as Moscow did during the days of the Soviet Union. Mao's China it isn't.

The island certainly isn't dangerous to anyone. Somebody said that the only communists remaining in the world are in Cuba, North Korea, and the Harvard faculty lounge. I do not know whether Harvard's professoriate thirsts for godless world hegemony, though the idea is not implausible, but it is absurd to put North Korea and Cuba in the same category. Pyongyang has, or wants, nuclear arms, and has both a huge army aimed at South Korea and a habit of testing long-range ballistic missiles. Cuba has little military and no one to use it against; from an American point of view, the Cuban armed forces are about as terrifying as George Will with a water pistol. It has no nuclear arms and no signs of wanting any. It is not a rogue state. It is a bedraggled island of pleasant people who need money.

Cuba is expensive. Figuring the prices of things is difficult—deliberately so, one might suspect—because of a peculiar game that the government plays with currencies. Cuba has two, the national currency, which a visitor almost never sees, and the CUC (pronounced "kook"), which appears to exist to impoverish tourists. If you change dollars, the government skims

20 percent off the top and then changes the rest at \$1.08 per CUC. If you change Mexican pesos, which I did, the rate is 13.3 pesos per CUC when the dollar was trading at about 11 pesos. Visitors have to buy things for CUC's, which the seller then has to exchange for national currency at a rate of... You see, nobody seems sure what anything really costs.

The island could use some investment. While I found neighborhoods with nice looking modern houses, said by taxi drivers to belong to governmental officials and employees of foreign firms, the rest of Havana needs paint, repairs, and new sidewalks. Countless once elegant houses with pillared porches and tall windows are now discolored and crumbling.

Why communists imagine themselves to be revolutionary is a mystery. Whenever they gain power in a country, it comes to a dead stop and sits there as other countries pass it by. I do not think that communism generates poverty; rather it finds it and preserves it. It has certainly done so here. Cuba seems firmly mired in 1959. How much of this comes from the embargo—*el bloqueo* as the Cubans call it—and how much from communism, I don't know. Nobody does. This is convenient for Castro, as he can blame everything on the United States, which he does.

Washington has become Fidel and his brother Raúl's irreplaceable supporter. On roadsides, along Havana's malecón, in little Mediterranean-looking villages down the coast, one sees signs of the type, "43 hours of the blockade would pay for a new school house"—or buy so many locomotives or complete the national highway or this or that. How the figures are arrived at, I don't know, but it doesn't matter. To an extent, the signs are not propaganda, but simply call attention to a fact: the embargo does hurt people who want jobs, dollars from tourists, and consumer goods. They are

perfectly aware why they don't have them—the American embargo. This may or may not always be quite true, but it has a convincing verisimilitude. It makes Fidel look good. He is standing up to the bastards who are strangling us.

How resolutely communist are the Cuban people? This is just an impression, but I would say not at all, if that much. Abstractions ending in "-ism" are hobbies for people who have time for them. Everyone I talked to wanted more money—a better job, better food, better clothes, a chance to take the wife out to dinner. After these, more freedom.

As an example of Castro's use of the embargo to maintain himself in power, consider the Internet. People I talked to had heard of it, of course, but had little idea what it was and no access to it. It can be found in hotels and apparently in tourist areas, though I didn't see a single cybercafe of the sort that are found every 20 feet in all Third World countries I know. Why no Internet? Cubans universally said that the U.S. embargo prevented Cuba from having access. This struck me as improbable. It was.

ON ROADSIDES, ALONG HAVANA'S MALECÓN, IN LITTLE MEDITERRANEAN-LOOKING VILLAGES DOWN THE COAST, ONE SEES SIGNS OF THE TYPE, "43 HOURS OF THE BLOCKADE WOULD PAY FOR A NEW SCHOOL HOUSE."

At ZDNet, a respectable American website dealing with matters electronic, I later found an account of a UN conference in Athens in which a Cuban official was asked what percentage of Cubans have access to the Net. He dodged the question frantically. ZDNet quotes Bill Woodcock, a network engineer and research director of Packet Clearing House, as follows: "Zero percent of Cubans are connected to the Internet. The Cuban government operates an incumbent phone company, which

maintains a Web cache. Cubans who wish to use the Internet browse the government Web cache. They do not have unrestricted access to the Internet." And if they did, the government would find itself with a lot of explaining to do.

Also from ZDNet: "A report published last month by the Reporters Without Borders advocacy group says, 'it is forbidden to buy any computer equipment without express permission from the authorities,' and spyware 'installed in all Internet cafes automatically detects banned content.' U.S. law exempts telecommunications equipment and service from the trade embargo."

The Cuban government isn't lying after all—who would have thought it? It actually can blame lack of access on the embargo. Washington in effect aids Castro in maintaining censorship.

Cuba has what are called "cocotaxis"—yellow spherical plastic things like part of a coconut husk attached to a motorcycle, providing transportation for two. Having hired a cocotaxi for a day, I got to know the driver reasonably well, to the point of being invited to his

house for snacks. His wife had just had a new daughter, and he was to no end proud of both. His take on the economy was that things were bad, had been worse, but were slowly getting better. Still, he said, taxes were high, and he had to buy gasoline in CUC's, which made it more expensive. Things like computers were out of reach, and he and his wife couldn't afford restaurants. Did he have many gringo fares, I asked. No, not many. He wished more would come. He was tired of being poor.

I am not sure why it is in the national interest of the United States to make a cabdriver and his family live on rice and fish. I did not feel notably safer on hearing about it.

An embargo makes sense when it makes sense, but doesn't when it doesn't. Cuba is no longer the spearhead of the Soviet Union. Indeed, according to many observers, there is no Soviet Union. We seem to proceed from pure vengefulness against Castro. Fidel, a freelance reprehensible dictator, beat Battista, our reprehensible dictator. We want to get even.

But Castro is not Cuba. The *CIA World Factbook* says that Cuba has 11,394,043 citizens. One of them is Castro, and 11,394,042 are not. Many Americans say that Castro is evil, and so we need to embargo him. But one person the embargo assuredly does not hurt is Castro. Does anyone think he eats less well because of it?

THE PROBLEM IS NOT CASTRO. IT IS THE HOSTILITY OF WASHINGTON. CASTRO COULD END THE EMBARGO BY SURRENDERING, SURE. WASHINGTON COULD END IT BY ENDING IT, AND PROBABLY END CASTRO AT THE SAME TIME.

Ah, but there are the Cuban émigrés in Miami. So much of American foreign policy seems determined by domestic politics, by a certain infantile truculence, and by ignorance of how people work. The embargo has accomplished nothing of any use for 50 years. Clearly the thing to do is keep at it for another 50. The "Cubans" in Miami demand it.

We are subject to considerable disinformation regarding the island. The Cuban émigrés in south Florida paint Cuba as a hellhole. It isn't. I've seen hellholes. Even before coming to Cuba, I had developed a dim view of the pseudo-Cubans of Miami. They were arrogant, and rude to Anglos if not actually hostile.

I found myself wanting to ask, "Just whose country do you think this is anyway?" But the answer was obvious.

By supporting the embargo, they are knowingly inflicting grave hardship on 11 million of their supposed fellows because they are mad at Fidel. This is contemptible. They want the U.S. to get back for them holdings that Castro confiscated on coming to power. Given the corruption and criminality rampant under Battista, it would be interesting to ask just how they came by their property. To try to get it back, they are perfectly willing to condemn the island's population to another 50 years of living on fish and rice. What patriots.

It is worth noting that 1959 was 48 years ago. The great majority of these alleged Cubans were born in the U.S., have never been to Cuba, and wouldn't live there if they could. They are gringos, Americans. They are also an important voting bloc in a state crucial to any pres-

idential candidate. As is so often the case in foreign policy, domestic politics trump national interest and coherent thought.

Living as I do in Mexico, perhaps I have a better angle of view on matters Latin-American than do ideological isolates in Washington. To the world below Laredo, Cuba is a heroic little country being bullied by the U.S., but not giving in. I'm not sure this isn't the opinion of the whole world except for America. Remember that much of Latindom believes that South America's economic doldrums spring from American exploitation. They don't: considerable faith is required to believe that Bolivia would

turn into Japan if only the U.S. stopped oppressing it. But beliefs, not facts, determine behavior.

American arguments against the island don't carry much weight in a region that sees things through Latin American eyes. For example, by regional standards Cuba isn't terribly poor. It didn't suffer the butchery of Guatemala and El Salvador. For 50 years it has been politically stable. Given the experience of Latin Americans with dictatorship, corruption, and violence, Cuba's government doesn't look bad.

Americans, perhaps because of the Cold War, tend to think that communism is communism, all poured from the same bucket. Not so. At the high end of horror, you have Stalin, Pol Pot, and Mao, genuine madmen of genocidal enthusiasms. North Korea's dynasty runs a close second.

Castro is neither mad nor genocidal. A dictator, yes. A tiresome windbag, yes. Repressive of dissent, yes—but willingness to repress dissent doesn't mean that there is a great deal of dissent to repress. As far as Cubans are concerned—I mean real Cubans, the kind who live in Cuba, not the make-believe variety in Miami—the problem is not Castro. It is the hostility of Washington. Castro could end the embargo by surrendering, sure. Washington could end it by ending it, and probably end Castro at the same time.

While I was on the island, the UN voted 184 to 4 to recommend that the United States end the embargo. In this vote, America had the support of the following great powers: Israel, Palau, and the Marshall Islands. Several Cubans spontaneously told me of the vote, smiling triumphantly. Intrigued, I made a point of bringing the vote up with people I ran into. They all knew of it—the governmental television made very sure of it—and grinned broadly over what they saw as a victory for Cuba over Bush.

If this island is unstable, yearning for Fidel to die so that it can revolt and become an appendage of the U.S., I'm Sophia of Anhalt-Zerbst.

I spent several hours walking through Havana's slums. These are extensive and ugly. Like so much of the city, they seem to have been built 50 years ago and never maintained. Commercial streets

(Fatherland or death!) and other exciting things. Adolescence dies hard everywhere. A billboard shows pictures of Bush, Hitler, and someone who perhaps was meant to be Cheney (it looked like but can't have been John Lennon) with arithmetic notation: Bush plus whomever equals Hitler. Che Guevara's face appears endlessly, the com-

to avoid the trap of instant-expertism. Some things I did know. A hellhole? No. Threat to anyone? No. Danger to international stability? No. In need of embargoing? No. Dictatorship? Yes. Adherent of the Bill of Rights? No.

How bad was Fidel? I really didn't know. Admirers and detractors are wildly ideological. Compared to Thomas Jefferson, he doesn't look good, though I don't think Castro owns slaves. Compared to other dictators the U.S. has installed or supported—Somoza, Trujillo, the Shah, Pinochet, Saddam Hussein, and so on—about par.

But however repugnant Castro may be, the practical question is whether the embargo is in America's interest. If the United States is still strong enough that it doesn't have to care what the world thinks, then the embargo, though unnecessary, doesn't matter (except in moral terms, which don't matter). But as the country wages war on the Muslim world, tries to contain China (that's going to work), pushes Russia into China's arms, and tries to intimidate South America—all of these at once—maybe it would be better to improve America's relations with this hemisphere.

An effective way to spread communism is to make heroes of communists. The entire world—except Israel, the Marshall Islands, and Palau—is against the U.S. on this one. Is it so important to keep Miami happy? ■

Fred Reed is a writer living near Guadalajara, Mexico.

I SAW POSTCARD RACKS OFFERING 13 DIFFERENT PHOTOS OF CHE GUEVARA. IF HE HAD SEVERE ACNE SCARS AND FUNNY EARS, HE WOULD BE OF NO SOCIALIST IMPORTANCE, BUT HE DOES MAKE A GOOD T-SHIRT.

have the usual pillars, often in pastel colors now covered with soot, the plaster falling off in patches. In side streets, potholes gape. Sometimes water, probably sewage, runs across the pavement. I saw nothing suggesting hunger, no potbellied malnutrition, but these people clearly have little. Time and again, I glanced into doorways and saw cruddy worn steps rising into darkness. Tired people gazed from windows.

Similar places exist in downtown Detroit and in Washington D.C., where abandoned buildings are common, where whole housing projects have their windows bricked up to keep them from becoming shooting galleries for needle people. In America, slums are racial in demarcation, but in Cuba they aren't. I encountered no hostility. In four hours, I didn't get so much as a hard look. In Detroit, I would have lasted five minutes. But these people are going nowhere—living, breeding, and dying with nothing to show for it. It is a rotten thing to do to them without very good reason. And there is no reason. It does not get rid of Fidel.

The trappings of bumper-sticker socialism are everywhere in Cuba. Signs on walls say "Venceremos!" ("We will conquer!") and "Patria o Muerte!"

munist Christ, shot from slightly below, staring bravely off into a socialist paradise that didn't fit on the t-shirt. I saw postcard racks offering 13 different photos of Che. If he had severe acne scars and funny ears, he would be of no socialist importance, but he does make a good t-shirt.

The press is assuredly controlled. The political section of a bookstore I saw consisted of maybe a dozen books about (sigh) Che, the rest being not much better. Confusingly, there were a couple of textbooks on business management. Television is heavy on affirmation of socialist patriotism. In particular, there are channels from China, which Cuba seems to regard as communist (when did you last hear of a communist economy growing at 10 percent, or at all?) and from Venezuela. Hugo Chavez clearly is thought to be a great man.

Toward the end of the adventure, I went back to the DiMar to commune with the wind and the exploding waves and ponder what I had seen. Cubans make good beer (Bucanero). I have to give them that, and while mayonnaise on shrimp may not seem advisable, it worked.

I wanted to sort out what I knew about Cuba from what I suspected, so as

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Europe's Last Colony

Bosnians are allowed to vote, but not to govern themselves.

By Brendan O'Neill

LONDON—Liberal commentators in Europe are desperately worried about Burma. They cannot bear the sight of a military junta using batons and worse to beat peaceful, saffron-clad monks and pro-democracy protesters off the streets. They are also perturbed by Pakistan, where Pervez Musharraf, a military strongman backed by the West, has declared a state of emergency and continues to delay the “day of democracy” when the people might choose the leader that they want.

Their frustration with bloody oppression in Burma and the snail-pace march toward democracy in Pakistan is understandable. Yet there seem to be strict limits to their liberal outrage. They get hot under the collar about repressive regimes in Asia, yet seem to feel no angst over the continued existence of a deeply undemocratic, almost feudal fiefdom right here in Europe, where an old-style colonial chief, appointed from without, enforces his writ with ruthless efficiency.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is falling apart. It is in the grip of its most serious political crisis since the Dayton Accord brought the civil war to a close in November 1995. Senior officials in EUFOR, the European Union peace-keeping force still stationed in Bosnia, are for the first time talking openly about the possibility of renewed conflict. And the crisis has been precipitated not by outbursts of ethnic hatred on the streets of Sarajevo but by the actions of Bosnia's High Representa-

tive, the supreme governor of Bosnia appointed by the Peace Implementation Council, a collection of 55 countries and agencies that represents the “international community” and oversees the enforcement of the Dayton Accord.

Unlike Burma and Pakistan, Bosnia has regular elections. The people choose their representatives. Yet the ultimate authority—the unelected High Representative, chosen and imposed by the PIC—has the power to override the decisions of elected politicians.

On Nov. 1, the current elected prime minister of Bosnia, Nikola Spiric, resigned in protest over the actions of the current unelected High Representative, Miroslav Laják, who, in a feudalistic move designed to make his job easier, overhauled Bosnia's constitutional makeup. The Dayton peace agreement decrees that every major political decision made in Bosnia must have the backing of all three of Bosnia's segmented ethnic communities: the Bosnian Muslims, Croats, and Serbs. The aim is to ensure a fairly smooth-running, consensual form of democracy and to keep ethnic one-upmanship to a minimum.

Yet in October, Laják brought in new measures aimed at “streamlining” the operation of Bosnia's central governing institutions. In a striking snub to Dayton, his measures drastically reduce the need for consensual agreement in the political decision-making process.

For the bureaucratic mandarins who

run Bosnia on behalf of the “international community,” the attraction of ditching tripartite consensus on every issue is clear: their jobs become less complicated if they don't have to manage the disagreements that inevitably arise in a divided political system, as they do in every democratic political forum.

Many also suspect that Laják's ultimate aim is to isolate those pesky Bosnian Serbs, whose elected politicians have been known to put forward political proposals that go against the wishes of Bosnia's colonial overlord. According to David Chandler, author of *Bosnia: Faking Democracy After Dayton*, Laják is creating a situation where “state institutions no longer have to take into account the opinions of Serb representatives of the Republika Srpska entity [the Serb section of Bosnia-Herzegovina].” In short, Laják's meddling with Bosnia's constitution is not only an affront to the internationally agreed Dayton peace agreement, it is also an implicit attempt by an unelected overseer to limit the power and punch of elected Serb leaders.

As he resigned in protest, Prime Minister Spiric voiced many Bosnians' discomfort with the continuing domination of their state by an unelected outsider. Spiric declared, “Bosnia-Herzegovina is absurd.” It is “unfortunately not a sovereign state” more than a decade after the civil war ended and Bosnia's status as an “independent nation” was institutionalized. “Twelve years after Dayton, for-

eigners have exclusive rule over this country, and I believe this isn't good for this country or its citizens," said Spiric. He added, "If the international community always supports the High Representative and not the institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, then it doesn't matter if I am the head of that state, or Bart Simpson." Currently, Bosnia has no elected PM—not Spiric, Bart Simpson, or anybody else.

Laják's meddling with the tripartite system and his attempt to sideline elected leaders are only the latest intervention into Bosnian politics by the strongman that is the High Representative. This colonial figure has quite extraordinary powers. In 2003, a European think tank called the European Stability Initiative described Bosnia as "the European Raj." It argued that "in Sarajevo in the early twenty-first century, as in Calcutta in the nineteenth, foreigners play the part of 'benevolent despots.'" The ESI condemned the "unlimited authority of an international mission to overrule all of the democratic institutions of [Bosnia], a sovereign member of the United Nations."

How far does the High Representative's authority extend? Well, the Office of the High Representative can dismiss elected presidents, prime ministers, judges, and mayors without submitting to review by any independent appeals body. In 1999, the third High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, dismissed the elected Serbian mayor, Mile Marceta. According to ESI, Marceta, an eminent non-nationalist leader of a displaced Serbs' movement, was thrown out of office because his championing of Serbs' right to return to land from which they had been expelled during the civil war irked "international field officers, who resented [his] visibility and his impatience with their mission's lack of progress toward securing the right of return." The Office of the High

A Lebanese woman, who became a U.S. citizen through a sham marriage and obtained security clearances that led to sensitive jobs with both the FBI and CIA, will likely be deported to Lebanon,

where it is probable an attempt will be made to kill her because of her CIA affiliation. Nada Nadim Prouty, who resigned her position after it was revealed that she fraudulently became an American citizen, was not a spy for Hezbollah as some poorly informed media commentary has been claiming. She was recruited into the CIA as an operations officer because of her fluent Arabic and worked in the Baghdad CIA station on terrorist targets, where she was highly praised for her efforts. She first provoked interest in 2005 by breaking internal regulations by searching FBI databases for derogatory information on her new brother-in-law, whom she distrusted and who had attended a Hezbollah conference in Beirut. The CIA position required extensive background checks as well as a second polygraph exam that apparently did not address her sham marriage. According to a senior CIA official, there are no counterintelligence concerns about her CIA employment and no evidence that she was working for or passed on information to Hezbollah. Aside from breaking internal FBI regulations, the only charge against her, to which she pleaded guilty, was obtaining her citizenship fraudulently, but she faces possible jail time before being forced to leave the country.



There has been a tendency when drafting counterterrorism legislation to enable criminalization of thoughts and intents in addition to penalizing substantive plans.

A 23-year-old of Asian descent who called herself the "Lyrical Terrorist" has just become the first woman convicted under the draconian terms of Britain's new Terrorism Act. On Nov. 9, Samina Malik was found guilty at the Old Bailey. The jury was told that she had written extremist poems praising Osama bin Laden, supporting martyrdom, and discussing beheading. Malik, who worked in a bookstore and has denied all the charges, had earlier been found not guilty of the more serious charge of possessing an article for a terrorist purpose. She has said the poems she posted on websites were "meaningless" and claims to have only called herself the Lyrical Terrorist "because it sounded cool." But the police reported they had found a "library" of extreme Islamist literature in her bedroom, including *The Al-Qaeda Manual* and *The Mujahedeen Poisons Handbook*. The court also heard that she had written, "The desire within me increases every day to go for martyrdom" on the back of a cash-register receipt. She was convicted of having articles "likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism." Now similar legislation is pending in the U.S. Congress. The Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act passed the House by a 405 to 6 vote and is awaiting approval by the Senate Homeland Security Committee, headed by Sen. Joe Lieberman. The act defines "homegrown terrorism" as "planning" or "threatening" to use force to promote a political objective and "violent radicalization" as the promotion of an "extremist belief system."

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Representative can veto candidates for ministerial positions without giving reasons for its actions. It can also impose legislation and create new institutions without estimating the cost to Bosnian taxpayers. And as Laják's recent actions showed, it can make changes to Bosnia's constitution without taking into account the views of elected officials.

When the Office of the High Representative was first set up after the civil war, it had very few formal powers. But in 1997, it slowly but surely started to intervene in Bosnia's internal political processes. In May of that year, the OHR purged the entire management board of the Bosnian Serb television broadcaster, after judging its programming to be inflammatory, and sent troops to occupy the broadcaster's offices and transmitters. Following this intervention by the OHR into the media life of postwar Bosnia, the Peace Implementation Council decided to grant it sweeping new powers so that it could continue keeping a check on Bosnia's naughty politicians, mayors, and media workers. This is when the OHR began to scale "the commanding heights of what amounts to a system of 'indirect rule,'" according to the ESI.

The OHR's powers came to be known as the "Bonn powers," and they were used extensively by High Representatives from the late 1990s onward. From 1997 to 1999, then High Representative Carlos Westerndorp dispatched an average of four "impositions" every month; Paddy Ashdown, the failed British politician who was appointed High Representative from 2002 to 2006, issued around 14 "impositions" a month. These ranged from dismissing elected officials to intervening in the work of the police to chastising media outlets for transmitting allegedly nationalistic or inflammatory material. Between 1997 and today, the OHR has

become, in Nikola Spiric's words, a bunch of "foreigners" who exercise "exclusive rule" over Bosnia.

The ESI points out that there is a glaring contradiction between the Dayton agreement's professed aim of "democratizing" Bosnia and the reality of a High Representative who has become increasingly interventionist in everyday politics: "The vague and general criteria [of the Bonn powers] lead inexorably toward the open-endedness of the Utilitarians' civilising imperialism, which is ultimately incompatible with the objective of democratisation." Currently, Bosnia is dominated by this new breed of "civilising imperialism," where Raj-style rulers picked and imposed by the Peace Implementation Council have the power to call the shots in virtually every area of political life.

In some ways, this is worse than the situation in a place like Pakistan. At least the Pakistanis have the promise of meaningful democracy to look forward to, hopefully sooner rather than later. The people of Bosnia-Herzegovina have been "granted" democracy, but it is shallow and meaningless as long as their decisions can be overridden by the whims of appointed foreign rulers.

The response of the current High Representative to the protests against his recent actions is striking. He says that Prime Minister Spiric's concern with preserving consensus and representational legitimacy is "over-emotional, irresponsible and insufficiently rational." This is clearly how the OHR, which sees itself as being above the messy business of electoral politics, views democracy: as a kind of childish emotional outburst that must be controlled by the better parenting instincts of cool and collected outsiders. Perhaps Laják sees himself as the Homer Simpson to Spiric's Bart, occasionally having to strangle the troublesome

child elected by the Bosnian people in order to keep him in his place.

So why is there so little international outcry about the stunning powers of the High Representative and the way he impedes the democratic will? Liberals have long supported Western intervention in Bosnia. During the civil war, they demanded Western military action to crush the Serbs and defend the Bosnian Muslims. And they got what they asked for in NATO's bombing of the Serbs in 1994 and 1995 and America's arming and training of the Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims and its cajoling of these forces to continue fighting against the Serbs long after all sides were war weary and desperate for a settlement. Indeed, liberal commentators did a great deal to depict the people of Bosnia as "overemotional" and "irrational": they embraced the Bosnian Muslims as eternal victims who needed Western patronage and protection, and they wrote off the Bosnian Serbs as savages who should be punished.

Not surprisingly, the protectorate of Bosnia, overseen by an internationally appointed colonial master, is still built on such prejudices; every now and then the democratic wishes of the overemotional and irrational populace are overridden—for Bosnians' own good, of course.

Some argue the High Representative is a necessary evil, who keeps apart Bosnia's potentially warring factions. In truth, it is elected Serbs and others who want to preserve the postwar consensual set-up while the High Representative rips it to shreds in order to "streamline" his bureaucracy. It's time to face the reality: the biggest threat to peace in Bosnia is the increasingly arrogant and reckless foreign meddling in its internal affairs. ■

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To Strike A Nation

“There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time,” Governor Coolidge telegraphed AFL President Sam Gompers during the

Boston police strike of 1919. The telegram elicited thunderous approval from Middle America and won Coolidge the nomination for vice president on the 1920 ticket of Warren Harding. Three years later, “Silent Cal” was president.

Even before 1919, America had endured dangerous strikes. When steelworkers at the Carnegie plant at Homestead on the Mon River protested a cut in wages, Henry Clay Frick closed the plant. Workers struck. Barges loaded with Pinkertons came up river from Pittsburgh. A battle ensued. Ten workers and three detectives died.

Sympathy for the strikers vanished when the young anarchist, Alexander Berkman, a lover of Emma Goldman, lied his way into Frick’s office and tried to assassinate him.

Frick transferred production to other plants and broke the union. From Skibo Castle in Scotland came a wire from Andrew Carnegie: “Life worth living again! Congratulate all around.”

A year after Homestead came the Panic of ’93 and the falling prices that depression produced. In 1894, Pullman car workers went on strike to protest wage cuts of 25 to 40 percent. Railway workers across America, rallied by Eugene V. Debs, were urged to strike in sympathy.

Atty. Gen. Richard Olney sent troops and 3,600 deputy marshals to Chicago and enjoined Debs from interfering with the delivery of U.S. mail. Violence erupted. Trains were derailed. Again, the strikers lost the country. Debs called for a general strike of all workers in Chicago. The call went unheeded.

The strike was broken, Debs turned to socialism, and would be imprisoned by Wilson for sedition in World War I. Pardoned by Harding, the old socialist was invited to the White House where Harding greeted him: “I have heard so damned much about you, Mr. Debs, that I am very glad to meet you personally.”

Pullman was as close to a general strike as America came.

In May 1926, Britain faced a general strike in sympathy with coal miners whose wages had been slashed when production fell along with prices after the war, and the U.S. and German coal flooded the markets. A foolish decision by the chancellor of the exchequer to revalue the pound at \$4.86, and thereby overprice British exports of coal, was responsible, charged John Maynard Keynes.

This brings us to the point. The transport workers’ strike in France that shut down Paris’s airports and stalled trains, joined for 24 hours by hospital workers, postal employees, telephone repair crews, teachers, students, and air-traffic controllers in something like a general strike may be a harbinger of things to come. Europe may be entering an era of strikes not against an industry but against the government, the people, the nation.

For the strikers in France are protesting reforms that will face every labor force in Old Europe. Virtually every nation there has voted benefits for civil servants, students, and retirees that the productive sectors cannot afford, if those nations are to compete in the global economy. Benefits voted by socialist

governments are going to be cut by conservative governments. That is why Nicolas Sarkozy won the French election over the Socialists’ Ségolène Royal.

Like all of Europe, France is facing a time of austerity. The high wages of government workers, the reduced working hours, the long vacations, the early retirements, the generous pensions, the health benefits all have to be paid for. Even in Paris there is no free lunch. Somebody pays the bill for *La Dolce Vita*.

As the public sector has become a heavier and heavier burden, an overtaxed private sector is rebelling, refusing to bear the cost. What this strike says is that both halves of the nation are willing to endure pain rather than lose any more of what they have.

When the pie is expanding, as it has since World War II, each may receive a larger slice. When the pie is no longer expanding, or shrinking, the battle for more can only be won at the expense of the other.

At this writing, Sarkozy remains committed and defiant. He was elected to do in a harmonious way what Maggie Thatcher did in a confrontational way, when she broke the power of Old Labor, and what Reagan did in a decisive way, when he fired the air-traffic controllers who had struck against the public in violation of their contracts.

Message for America: Before voting national health insurance, we had best address the huge, existing, unfunded mandates of Social Security and Medicare. For dealing with them will cause the same pain for taxpayers and beneficiaries that Frenchmen are experiencing today.

Message for the West: Socialism has reached the end of the line. If the rebellion of the producer class fails, the nation goes under. ■

Argue Like It's 1991

The interventionist consensus breaks down, and an overdue debate begins.

By Justin Logan

IT'S TOUGH TO BELIEVE in the context of today's imperial paralysis, but for a fleeting moment at the end of the Cold War, the foreign-policy community was so off balance that America had a meaningful, wide-ranging debate about the ends of American foreign policy and the means to pursue them. In a series of essays published first by *The National Interest*, and then compiled into a 1991 book titled *America's Purpose*, conservatives, neocons, and libertarians hashed out their differences. Or tried to, anyway.

The depth of the analysis demonstrated a much greater willingness than has existed at any point since to respond to questions of why we have a foreign policy and what it is supposed to do. One of many strange-bedfellows moments came in the opening paragraph of neoconservative author Nathan Glazer's essay, "A Time for Modesty":

There is a good deal of extravagance, to my mind, in the first two chapters in this volume, by Charles Krauthammer and Nathan Tarcov. Whatever other disagreements I may have with Patrick J. Buchanan, I find nothing objectionable in his flat assertion, "When this Cold War is over, America should come home."

Just a few years later, however, Washington had settled on an uneasy compromise: no direct plunge into empire, but no coherent strategy for shedding the myriad commitments America had taken on during the Cold War either. Moreover, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the first President Bush's effective shepherding of an international coalition to

repel it, led much of the world to believe that the "new world order" was a sort of managerial unipolarity whereby America would marshal the world's resources and legitimacy to protect the globe against threats collectively agreed upon.

Since then, obviously, the bloom has come off the rose. After the first Bush administration, hard questions had to be answered. Should NATO expand or disband? Should we liquidate or sustain U.S. military bases in South Korea, Japan, and Europe? Was Russia a defeated enemy to be held down or a new partner to be embraced? Could China be trusted? And over time, conservatives and liberals alike came to embrace a sort of imperialism by default: keep and ultimately expand NATO; maintain our defense commitments to South Korea, Japan, and Europe; and drift uneasily between attempts to engage Russia where we saw leverage and contain her where we saw ambition. The China question was bandied about in the mid-1990s, with the establishment deciding to engage her economically and contain her militarily. And so it went.

But in truth, since that brief fracas at the end of the Cold War, there has not been a sustained, serious debate about U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, the discussion in Washington has grown increasingly crabbed, with members of the interventionist consensus merely haggling over process questions, mostly on partisan lines. Think tanks, ostensibly in place to foster open debate, have become insular and riddled by groupthink. The American Enterprise Institute, for example, with far more influence on the current

administration than any other, has stretched the bounds of intellectual honesty to the breaking point.

To assess the viability of the Iraq surge strategy, AEI invited the two authors of the surge, Frederick W. Kagan and retired Gen. Jack Keane. To provide the impression of balance, the institute invited as a critic James Miller, a scholar from the center-left Center for a New American Security, whose report on Iraq agrees that the United States should stay in Iraq—but leave around 2012. Thus, for AEI the range of debate on what to do in Iraq in 2007 runs from "stay until victory" to "stay another 5 years."

As another example, to discuss Michael Ledeen's book on Iran, AEI invited Clifford May and R. James Woolsey. May is a hawkish former communications director for the RNC, and Woolsey is the neoconservative former director of the CIA who praised Norman Podhoretz's *World War IV* as "a huge service to truth and history." Ledeen, in turn, authored in the *New York Sun* a fawning review of John Bolton's memoir—despite the fact that Bolton is his colleague at AEI. The replacement of forums with rallies and queries with fatwas has crippled the debate in Washington.

But there are several signs that the interventionist consensus is coming under increased scrutiny. The first is the undeniable success of Texas Congressman Ron Paul's campaign for president. Though still languishing in the polls, Paul shattered the single-day Republican fundraising record by pulling in more than \$4 million on Nov. 5. The campaign had been garnering major attention from

a media that is certainly not favorably inclined ideologically, with Paul appearing on the “Tonight Show” and in other high-profile venues. Paul is running on two major policy issues: returning to the gold standard and reversing the U.S. policy of attempting to run the Middle East. It’s left to the reader to determine to which of those policies we should ascribe his success.

There has also been a flurry of discussion in the foreign-policy community that harkens back to the sweeping debate in 1991. Barry Posen, the head of the security studies program at MIT, penned an essay on grand strategy in the November/December issue of the *The American Interest* entitled “The Case

all stripes into apoplexy. From the left, former Princeton professor John Ikenberry complained that “the Iraq war will be rendered all the more tragic if it leads America to pull back from its European and Asian security partnerships and its leadership in maintaining the institutional bases of global order.” Likewise, conservative Josef Joffe complained that Posen’s strategy amounts to the familiar bogeyman of “isolationism.” Joffe then turned President Reagan’s dictum about “peace through strength” on its head by arguing that “a great power must carry great burdens or else it stops being one.” By this feeble logic, America would be even greater by taking on more commitments.

eliminate all villainous governments and groups everywhere.” It is this disconnect that has precipitated the most striking development in the debate over American national security in recent years: the bold entry of uniformed U.S. military officers into the debates over grand strategy and foreign policy.

Since the military lives or dies on the solvency of American foreign policy, it is understandable that the men and women who have been harmed most by the Bush administration’s foreign policy are feeling the need to weigh in. Although traditionally reticent about voicing their policy views in popular media, uniformed military personnel, both active duty and retired, have increasingly been speaking out. From Army Lt. Col. Paul Yingling’s article “A Failure in Generalship” in the *Armed Forces Journal*, to the pessimistic August *New York Times* article authored by seven officers stationed in Iraq, to retired Gen. John Abizaid’s recent comments that the United States could live with a nuclear Iran, military officers are entering the debates over foreign policy, perhaps concerned that the discussion as it stood was failing to provide the kind of strategy worthy of their sacrifice.

All of this intellectual ferment taken together is only a small sign of change taking place post-Iraq. Domestic lobbies, the military-industrial complex, and particularly the media and political leadership will all have significant influence on the narrative of “who lost Iraq?” And it remains to be seen whether that disaster will be taken as a misstep in an otherwise sound policy or an indictment of the policy more broadly. But there are heartening signs that, at this point, we could be headed for a serious re-evaluation of how we got here. Grading on a curve, it would be a good first step. ■

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POSEN CANNOT RESIST NOTING IN CLOSING THAT THE **INTERVENTIONIST CONSENSUS** ARRIVED AT AFTER THE COLD WAR **HAS BEEN TESTED AND FAILED.**

for Restraint.” Posen’s argument includes three main proposals: “The United States needs to be more reticent about the use of military force; more modest about the scope for political transformation within and among countries; and more distant politically and militarily from traditional allies.”

After making a thorough case for his strategy, Posen cannot resist noting in closing that the interventionist consensus arrived at after the Cold War has been tested and failed. By contrast, he proposes that America should “conceive its security interests narrowly, use its military power stingily, pursue its enemies quietly but persistently, share responsibilities and costs more equitably, watch and wait more patiently. Let’s do this for 16 years and see if the outcomes aren’t better.”

While the essay elicited surprisingly positive comments from reformed neocon Francis Fukuyama as well as from others, it sent interventionists of

On the heels of Posen’s article came an essay in the November/December issue of *Foreign Affairs* by Columbia professor Richard K. Betts making the argument—unthinkable six years ago—that the defense budget is too big. Not including the supplemental spending for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States spends roughly as much on defense as does the rest of the world combined—and still almost all political figures insist we need to spend even more. Betts argues, “Washington spends so much and yet feels so insecure because U.S. policymakers have lost the ability to think clearly about defense policy.”

Betts’s most devastating point is that even the increases in military spending that have been proposed by the most hawkish presidential candidates would be woefully inadequate for supporting their imperial foreign policies. He sees “a defense budget caught between two stools: higher than needed for basic security but far lower than required to

Motorcycle Diaries

Learning to ride—and to fall—in 1950s California.

By Roger D. McGrath

THE FIFTIES were not a decade but a phenomenon that began shortly after the end of World War II and lasted at least until the early 1960s. Many of us reared in the era were indelibly stamped with its characteristics.

That is especially true for those who grew up in southern California, where surfing, motorcycles, drag racing, rock 'n' roll, and fighting were teenage vocations. The climate co-operated, and California's booming economy meant work for every kid who wanted money for his balsa wood (and later polyurethane form) board, '40 Ford Coupe, or BSA. For the first time in American history, kids from middle- and even lower-class families had at least some disposable income. Teenagers—the word wasn't coined until the 1940s—became a market.

I had an older brother and sister so had the benefit of being introduced to the good things of the Fifties well before my time. During the 1920s, Pacific Palisades developed on a small mesa sandwiched between bluffs that dropped into the sea on one side and the steep slopes of the Santa Monica Mountains on the other. The McGraths arrived shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Relatives had been there since the 1930s. I wasn't born until the year after the surrender, but during the war, my 12-year-old brother helped patrol the bluffs and scan the beaches for invading Japanese. He carried a single-shot, bolt-action .22 rifle. Older boys and adult men carried 30.06 deer rifles and .12 gauge shotguns. They were

ready to give the Imperial Japanese Navy what for.

Our garage contained some souvenirs left there by two cousins who had served in the Marines on Guadalcanal, Cape Gloucester, and Peleliu. We played in the open fields behind our house and fought daily battles with the Japanese enemy. I learned about Pearl Harbor, the Bataan Death March, and the many battles of the Pacific before I started kindergarten.

World War II was a part of many a conversation and looking back I can see that the adults were determined to make the most of their lives and give their children everything they could not during the rationing years of the war or the poverty of the Great Depression. Youth was indulged like never before, yet the church, traditions, and enough stern parents and tough cops were still around to set limits on the teenage beast.

One of the first manifestations of the Fifties occurred at Hollister, California, when several newly formed motorcycle clubs descended on the town on July 4, 1947, as part of an American Motorcycle Association sanctioned and Salinas Ramblers Motorcycle Club sponsored three-day "Gypsy Tour." Dirt-track races and hill climbs were the featured attractions. Many of the riders were World War II vets and, having seen buddies die by the dozens on some God-forsaken battlefield, were not ready for the grey-flannel conformity of corporate America. The clubs had names like "Pissed Off Bastards," "Booze Fighters," and "Market Street Commandoes." Upwards

of 2,000 roared into Hollister, a small town known more for cattle and earthquakes than brawling bikers.

The local police were overwhelmed. Riders drank, fought, ignored traffic regulations, rode their bikes into bars and restaurants, raced in the streets, and crashed their machines. Like cowboys at the end of the Long Drive, the motorcyclists had "taken the town." Lt. Roy McPhail of the seven-man police department dispatched an urgent request for aid. By the next day, dozens of highway patrolmen arrived, armed with shotguns and tear-gas canisters. An informal state of martial law was declared. "It's just one hell of a mess," said Hollister Police Chief Fred Earl. The police ultimately arrested more than 50 bikers, but confessed, "If we jailed everyone who deserved it, we'd have herded them in by the hundreds." The emergency room at Hazel Hawkins Hospital was jammed. One rider had his skull fractured. Local accommodations were overwhelmed, too. Bikers slept in city parks, on the courthouse lawn, in fields, on haystacks. A San Francisco newspaper noted, "one out of ten was a girl, wearing slacks and a tight sweater and riding in tandems."

By July 6, the bikers left. Chief Earl, a veteran of 43 years, called the rally "the worst 40 hours in Hollister history." But the bikers felt that they were just having fun. "We like to show off," said Jim Clearwater. "We make a lot of noise and everybody looks. It's just a lot of fun." Added Jim Long, "I like a bike with a lot of drag. Drag? That's pickup. See how quick you can get to 90mph. I get a jolt

out of that jerk takeoff. I like lots of growler, too. Growler? Why that's funnel. Straight pipe. Roar." Jerry Witcher concluded, "Autos are dead. Bikes aren't dangerous. They don't take much space and they go through traffic. I like to tear them apart and see if they go faster when I put them back together." Autos weren't dead, but speed and noise would characterize the Fifties.

Instead of reducing the population of motorcyclists, the Hollister rally fueled growth. The American Motorcycle Association claimed that 99 percent of riders were good, law-abiding citizens. Many began putting "1%" on their jackets.

In 1948, a club that would gain national, and even international, attention was formed in San Bernardino—the Hell's Angels. These were the "Berdoo" Angels, and they dominated the world of outlaw clubs. Chapters sprouted throughout California and beyond. By the mid-'60s, the Berdoo chapter was fading, and the Oakland chapter under Sonny Barger had risen to prominence. By then, however, drugs, age, and the FBI were getting the best of the Angels. Like the Fifties, the Angels were becoming a relic of the past.

The rally at Hollister also inspired Hollywood. Directed by Stanley Kramer and starring Marlon Brando, "The Wild One" was released in 1953. It is so bad that it might rate some cult status. Brando spends the entire movie posing, his face fixed in his best sullen youth look. The plot is thin and contrived, with only occasional similarities to the Hollister explosion. But motorcycles fill the screen. Bikes slide, wheel stand, bolt to high speed, roar. We loved it.

Most of the bikes were Harleys. Brando himself rode a Triumph. I didn't realize it at the time, but I was becoming a fan of British bikes, at least the flat track or scrambler versions. They looked lean and mean and race-ready. I wanted one. I wasn't quite seven.

Difficult as it is to believe today, the Palisades was still on the edge of the civilized world then. The canyons hadn't been filled, and the mountains hadn't been sliced and graded. Open fields and vacant lots were everywhere. One of the principal streets of the town's commercial area was La Cruz, except no one knew it by that name. Everyone called it "Bumpy Road," as it was dirt and not regularly graded.

Cops were infrequent visitors to the Palisades, and 13- and 14-year-old guys were usually left alone to ride motorcycles on back roads and dirt lots. Before houses crept up the canyons and the slopes of the Santa Monica Mountains, dirt fire roads began just a twist of the throttle north of Sunset Boulevard.

When I was young, I watched our local teenage motorcyclists with awe as they climbed steep hillsides and raced on homemade oval tracks on vacant lots. Kemp Aaberg, who was one of Los Angeles's best pole-vaulters while at

the gears, I thought that I was going to be blown off the back.

By the time I turned 15, I had managed to save some money from my paper route, from day labor at construction sites, and from working for my older brother's janitorial service at night—jobs President Bush tells us Americans won't do today. By then I was on my second surfboard and fourth bicycle, and it was time for a motorcycle. At 15 and a half, the state issued learners permits that entitled one to drive as long as a licensed driver was in the vehicle—with one exception, a motorcycle. I was determined to buy a bike and roar down the highways of California before I turned 16.

My first was a 250cc BSA. It was a single cylinder "thumper" without much horsepower, but I was stoked. I really learned how to ride—and how to fall—on that "Beezer." I slid the thing, crossing up the front end to maintain balance, and screwed on the juice to increase

I DIDN'T REALIZE IT AT THE TIME, BUT I WAS BECOMING A FAN OF BRITISH BIKES, AT LEAST THE FLAT TRACK OR SCRAMBLER VERSIONS. THEY LOOKED LEAN AND MEAN AND RACE-READY. I WANTED ONE. I WASN'T QUITE SEVEN.

University High School and later became a legendary surfer, was one of these. He started with a little 125cc two-stroke Husqvarna and graduated to a four-stroke 500cc Velocette. His younger brother, Steve, followed with a 250cc two-stroke Dot Villiers. The youngest brother, Denny, and I would watch them ride, anticipating the day we graduated from bicycles to bikes.

When Steve was 16 in 1957, he bought a customized 500cc Triumph twin for the street. The engine was built with every speed component available. He put me on the back, and we ripped through the Palisades. With each shift of

traction. I stood it up and rode on the rear wheel. I downshifted—brakes were only for coming to a stop at traffic lights—and accelerated through turns. I leaned until I scraped the footpegs, beveling the rubber on them at a 45-degree angle. No helmet, no gloves, no leathers. No brains, either, I suppose, but the thrill was on.

Within a year, I upgraded to a 650cc Matchless Scrambler. I bought it used, but it was nearly brand new. The whiskers were still on the tires. The guy who owned it was a senior at Southern Cal. He dumped it on one of his first rides and, scared silly, locked it in a

garage. I heard about it from one of his fraternity brothers and, knowing that particular model was the cleanest and leanest 650 that Matchless produced, made him an offer. He told me to come and pick it up. I was there the next day.

I now had a bike with nearly triple the horsepower of my 250 BSA. The Matchless Scrambler was very low geared and wouldn't do much more than 90 mph, but it got there in a hurry. In its day, it was the smoothest and best handling of all British bikes. The 650 Triumph was faster. So, too, was the 650 BSA. But I could throw that 650 Matchless over in a turn and cross it up in the dirt like it was a lightweight 250.

One of my good buddies, Scott McKenzie, had beaten me in the race to get a bike. He was a bit older and had managed to buy a 650 BSA before I had gotten my 250. He was only 15 and a sophomore at Palisades High School, but looked like he was an All-American college football player. He was already 225 pounds of pure muscle, bone, and sinew and was a two-way starter on the varsity football team. Not only was he big, with a bone structure that could have carried—and later did—another 20 pounds, but he was fast. Moreover, unlike most guys who were taller and heavier than anyone else their age and, as a consequence, rarely faced challenges and were usually mild sorts, Scott had a horrific temper. I'm thankful he was my buddy.

The football season had only just begun when Scott was reported dead. The report actually had it wrong—but Scott should have been dead. He was riding his BSA on Sunset at 65 mph near the “Will Rogers turn” in the Rustic Canyon neighborhood of the Palisades when he came up behind two slow moving cars, side by side. He thought he could accelerate by them on the left side of the road and slip back before a car came the other way. He was wrong. He

hit a 1958 Ford Thunderbird head on. The closing speed was 110 mph. Scott had on our uniform of the day, Levis and a t-shirt—and no helmet. His bike smashed into the T-Bird's grill, sending him ricocheting off the car's hood and through the windshield. His massive body continued on its trajectory, miraculously flying between the driver and his wife seated in the front bucket seats and the couple's daughters in the back. Scott burst through the back window and flew 50 feet down the highway before hitting the pavement. Several crushing bounces later, he came to a rest.

THE FINGERS ON HIS LEFT HAND STILL WEREN'T ENTIRELY WORKING, AND HE HAD TO PULL IN THE CLUTCH LEVER WITH HIS HAND INSTEAD OF ONLY SQUEEZING WITH HIS FINGERS, BUT AT THE TIME, IT SEEMED TO MAKE SENSE. THE BIKE WAS READY.

Traffic halted. The couple in the T-Bird raced back to Scott. The woman covered him with a Chinchilla coat. No ambulance blanket. Scott would die in style. He was rushed to UCLA hospital and drifted in and out of consciousness for the next three weeks. He had broken more than a dozen bones, including fracturing his skull, and was covered with lacerations. The fingers on his left hand barely remained attached, and the blunt force had moved his heart an inch. He would be sown, pinned, and plated together. He already looked like a cross between Jack Dempsey and one of the McKeever brothers—both All Americans at SC at the time. Now he looked like a cross that had survived a grizzly attack.

Scott later would put us in stitches describing the accident, although he only remembered bits and pieces of it. He recalled bouncing off the hood and hitting the windshield then flying through the air about five feet above the ground—and not losing altitude. “This is bitchin’!” he remembered thinking.

Scott was not trying to be funny. He told it with such guilelessness that we laughed until the tears rolled down our cheeks. If anybody had watched him go by, it would have been reported as a flying Bigfoot sighting.

Scott spent the next year recovering and rebuilding his bike. By then I had my Matchless, and he wanted to be certain his BSA was faster. He put a more radical cam, high compression pistons, and oversized valves into the engine. He had the head ported and polished and the crank balanced. He rebuilt the carburetors. He did everything possible to make that BSA

fly. But he was working with a handicap. My bike was 30 pounds lighter, and I was 60 pounds lighter. It takes quite a few ponies to compensate for 90 pounds, but Scott was determined to more than compensate.

On his first real ride since his accident, we went up the coast highway and over Topanga Canyon to Calabasas. Scott was a bit gun shy, slowing on blind turns to speeds only a little above the limit. The fingers on his left hand still weren't entirely working, and he had to pull in the clutch lever with his hand instead of only squeezing with his fingers. He should have rehabilitated for several more months, but at the time, it seemed to make sense. The bike was ready.

Within weeks, Scott was back to his old self. I liked riding with him because I knew that he might do something insane but never something squirrely. If we found ourselves traveling at too high a speed in a turn with a decreasing radius, Scott would just keep leaning and screwing the power on—and so

would I—until either our tires broke loose and we rode the bikes down or we made the turn. We could ride wheel-to-wheel with confidence. If it weren't for those 3,000-pound cars whose drivers thought they had a right to a portion of the pavement...

We both bought second bikes for use purely on dirt tracks and fire roads. I got a Triumph from a racer who was quitting the track. Scott got a BSA that was also race-ready, beautifully prepared by another Palisades rider several years older, Laddie McClurg, who could have ridden professionally were it not for personal problems. Another friend did. Sonny Nutter became a good flat tracker and an even better TT rider, and years later a nationally prominent Speedway racer.

On the fire roads or a dirt track, Scott just couldn't slide like the rest of us. Now weighing more than 230 pounds but still without any fat to lose, centrifugal force in turns caused him to slide far wider than the rest of us. Bob Wirth, thin as a reed and a perfect jockey on his own Triumph, called Scott "Wideslide." He didn't mind the nickname so much as the rest of us sliding underneath him in turns. Infuriated, he would screw it on down the straightaways like an enraged bull, but he was just too big for sliding in the dirt in any kind of competition. Undeterred, he would contemplate new ways to make his bike faster.

I got good at doing wheel stands and could pull my Matchless or Triumph up at a fairly steep angle and ride for a good distance. I especially enjoyed standing it up when cops were coming in the opposite direction. The stunt particularly provoked them. Scott would ride beside me laughing like crazy. The sight of him howling with his fierce visage and big Celtic chin—this was before helmets were required—tweaked the cops still more. If they were on bikes themselves, all the better. Cops in cars knew they

couldn't catch us. Cops on bikes actually thought they could. It was a mismatch but loads of fun. If they radioed ahead or were lying in wait, we always had the fire roads.

The cop we enjoyed tweaking the most was A.C. Miller, who regularly gave motorists tickets for exceeding the speed limit by no more than three or four miles per hour. He gave Dave Tolley's dad a ticket for rolling through a stop sign at 2 mph—on a bicycle.

The best stunt against Miller came from an unexpected source. Mike Manaugh was a quiet sort, who rarely found himself in trouble. That was left to his younger brother, Pat, who was my age and a good buddy. The three of us and another neighbor and bike rider, Lee Zordich, were sitting in the Manaugh's garage one day when Mike began a strange project, spraying his 650 Triumph entirely flat black with a water-based paint. We watched with fascination, reckoning that Mike had lost his mind. A couple of days later, all was ready. He donned an entirely black outfit, complete with black neckerchief. His blond head was hidden under a black helmet with a smoked face shield. He was the Black Knight. Everyone gathered at the local hangout, the Hot Dog Show, at the designated hour. When Officer A.C. Miller, LAPD, came cruising up Sunset Boulevard into the Palisades, scanning the traffic for the slightest infraction, the Black Knight roared by. Miller gave chase. Mike made several passes by the Hot Dog Show with Miller vainly in pursuit. We roared our approval.

We were always on the lookout for a new thrill on a bike—and were not always appreciated by that race of people called "adults." To slow us down, something new appeared on a few private streets—speed bumps. They simply invited experimentation. The first in our area were put in on Oakmont Drive, a private road off the north end of Rock-

ingham Drive, a street in Brentwood on the east side of Mandeville Canyon since made infamous as the home of O.J. Simpson at the time he murdered his ex-wife. One day, just as I had gotten the front end of my Matchless up in the air while racing over one of Oakmont's newly installed speed bumps, a car roared right up to my rear wheel.

"Some pissed-off resident," I thought. The guy had a right to be. This was his private road, and I was on it, doing wheel stands and making noise. But then I was 17 and Irish. As he pulled alongside me, I couldn't help but hear the whine of 12 cylinders. Ferrari 250 GT Berlinetta, about the hottest sports car of the era. I looked over, figuring the guy would be flipping me off and the routine scenario would unfold: I would return the compliment, and we would both pull over and fight. That's the way it was done in those days. No lawyers, just punches.

But instead of giving me the finger, he motioned for me to follow him. It was Steve McQueen. Up into his garage we went. "Give me five minutes," he said as I sat on my bike looking at his two Triumphs. He had just made "The Great Escape" the year before and had done most of his own riding. We knew that Bud Ekins, the owner of a motorcycle shop and one of southern California's top riders, had made the famous jump, but we also knew that Steve would have tried it if the studio had allowed it.

He came back wearing Levis and a sawed-off sweatshirt and within minutes we were sliding our bikes on the fire roads of the Santa Monica Mountains. Steve was 34 and a movie star, but on a bike, he was just one of us—another product of the Fabulous Fifties with a rebel streak a mile wide. ■

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Are We There Yet?

IN THE MONTHS SINCE the widely reported testimony of Gen. David Petraeus and Amb. Ryan Crocker in September, security conditions in Iraq appear to have improved, especially in the neighborhoods of Baghdad and in the western province of Anbar. This has caused many supporters of the war to make premature declarations of victory that once again conveniently ignore the institutional and political weaknesses of Iraq.

Columnist Donald Lambro cheered, "As of last week, the surge was working better than anyone could have possibly predicted." That would be more convincing if supporters of the surge had not started declaring how well it was working in early February long before they could have possibly known.

Tony Blankley declared the end to be in sight: "a very real expectation that next year the world may see a genuine, old-fashioned victory in the Iraq war." Ralph Peters exulted, "the positive indicators are now so strong that the left's defeatist lies are losing traction among the American people."

Neither Blankley nor Peters has any evidence for these claims. We cannot have an "old-fashioned victory" in asymmetric warfare, as even the president has had to acknowledge, and public opinion has not become any more hawkish than it was when a majority voted for what they hoped would be an end to the war. Over 60 percent of Americans want U.S. forces out within a year—a figure unchanged from last fall.

The *Washington Post* declared in an editorial, "By every metric used to measure the war, there has been an enormous improvement since January." Every metric, that is, unless you include measures of rebuilt and functioning infrastructure, political progress, or public

opinion—all of which are as vital to success as physical security. The center of gravity in our counterinsurgency is the Iraqi people, yet Iraqi support for our immediate withdrawal has only grown during 2007, even as support for the Iraqi national government has been collapsing.

Not chastened by the string of flawed historical analogies supporters have used to describe the Iraq War, Charles Krauthammer wrote of the surge: "It does not have the drama of the Inchon landing or the sweep of the Union comeback in the summer of 1864. But the turnabout of American fortunes in Iraq over the past several months is of equal moment—a war seemingly lost, now winnable."

Undaunted by having badly misunderstood the nature of this war for years, supporters are once again interpreting counterinsurgency in terms of conventional warfare between field armies. Six months ago, when casualties were spiking during the worst of this deadliest year for U.S. forces in Iraq, the same voices assured us that increased levels of violence also showed success and the desperation of enemy forces. In two years, we have gone from Vice President Cheney's "last throes of the insurgency" to hope for an "old-fashioned victory."

If it feels as if we are going in circles, we are. The levels of violence over recent months have matched those from the end of 2005 and start of 2006—levels that seemed appalling at the time. And if the administration has finally discovered effective tactics for improving security, why is it preparing to stop the plan that has produced these gains? As Andrew Bacevich explained in his *TAC* cover story on Petraeus, the administration and the general have decided not to

exploit the advantage gained by the increased numbers of American soldiers in Iraq, choosing instead the more politically palatable option of reducing U.S. forces in Iraq to pre-surge levels. If the surge is responsible for declining violence, the end of this necessarily temporary fix will likely mean a return to the disastrous conditions of last year.

The touted transformation of Anbar came about unexpectedly, beginning before and independently of the increased numbers of American soldiers, and has represented an example of so-called "bottom-up" reconciliation: local tribesmen, militiamen, and "former" insurgents banding together against a common foe, in this case al-Qaeda in Iraq. Yet this approach will likely reinforce the political divisions within Iraq and simply defer the next round of fighting. The relative success of these ground-level efforts has only thrown into more stark contrast the paralysis and inaction gripping the Iraqi national government. The limited cooperation at local levels underscores just how deadlocked the political factions in the Iraqi government are and how compromised by sectarian loyalties the national police force has become. Tentative local success holds up a mirror to the rest of Iraq and shows us strategic failure.

The public has been ill served by too many false promises of progress made and corners about to be turned—one reason reports of the success of the surge are not changing views on the war. When judged by President Bush's own standards, the surge has not led to the political progress it was intended to facilitate. The broader plan for Iraqi political unity and security self-sufficiency has failed. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*Margot at the Wedding*]

Tell Me About Your Mother

By Steve Sailer

FEW FILMS have more precisely delineated why younger people loathe their Baby Boomer parents' experiments with sexual liberation than Noah Baumbach's painfully autobiographical comedy about his bohemian intellectual parents' 1980s divorce, "The Squid and the Whale." The adults, both writers, calmly set up a fair sounding joint-custody arrangement that has their two children (and family cat) ceaselessly hauled about Park Slope, a literary neighborhood in Brooklyn, but it turns out to be a logistical and emotional catastrophe.

In "The Squid and the Whale," Jeff Daniels won some long deserved recognition for his hilarious portrayal of Baumbach's father, a pompous "experimental fiction" author and professor given to dinner-table pronouncements such as referring to Kafka as "one of my predecessors."

Despite adoring reviews, most critics missed the 2005 film's point: that the actual villain was Baumbach's adulterous mother. They overlooked its central theme—the destructiveness of female infidelity—because it's sexist (and therefore unthinkable) to notice that, for obvious reproductive reasons, a wife's cheating is even more destructive for the family than a husband's, even though countless human cultures have felt that way.

The irony was that Baumbach's blivi-

ating father was equally clueless about his own nature. In theory, he was an artistic genius above all those deadening bourgeois morals like monogamy. In reality, however, he was a mediocre writer but a faithful husband and reasonably diligent provider who deserved better than cuckoldry.

The younger Baumbach's eagerly awaited new movie, "Margot at the Wedding," with Nicole Kidman as a prominent short-story writer and unfaithful wife who inflicts her moral and mental breakdown on her adolescent son when she brings him to her estranged sister's second marriage ceremony, makes his prior film brutally clear. To clear up misconceptions about who the guilty party in his parents' divorce was, Baumbach has John Turturro drop by as Kidman's gallant, kind husband, an English professor who tries to save their marriage from her affair with another writer.

Meanwhile, the insidious Margot does her passive-aggressive best to sabotage the upcoming wedding of her aging, pregnant sister (Baumbach's wife, Jennifer Jason Leigh) to an unemployed musician. Jack Black, the usually charismatic star of "School of Rock," does an impression of his typical fan in his role as Leigh's heavy-metal-damaged fiancé. Margot liberally displays the IQ elitism of Manhattan liberals, telling her sister that she's too smart for her fiancé, only to be taken aback when her potential brother-in-law mentions that he went to Stuyvesant, the famous science high school that admits only 850 of 28,000 applicants.

Margot's malevolence is both calculated and spontaneous. She indulges the artist's sense of entitlement, the assurance that holding her tongue to be polite would sap her talent. Moreover, Margot likes provoking traumas because she recounts the family's secrets in her *New Yorker* stories, just as the sometimes

self-loathing Baumbach does in his movies.

Sadly, in sharp contrast to "The Squid," "Margot" doesn't really work. Napoleon supposedly said, "Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by incompetence," but Baumbach now appears to have it in for his audience. While his low-budget last film was cheap looking but at least visually serviceable, this one is intentionally underexposed to look depressing. All the outdoor scenes appear to be taking place during a partial solar eclipse. Likewise, the plotting and editing are carefully worked out to frustrate viewers' desires for character development and dramatic interest.

Worst of all, although competently acted, "Margot at the Wedding" is just not funny. Baumbach repeatedly sets up scenes so preposterously cruel that the audience is primed to laugh in relief, but he is too angry at his anti-heroine character to finish the jokes. The sympathy that made his depiction of his father amusing and ultimately endearing in "The Squid" is lacking here.

Hopefully, "Margot" will be a brief lapse for Baumbach. Worrisomely, though, it's part of an annoying trend toward clever and quirky but unfunny films by high-IQ auteurs like Wes Anderson, whose "The Royal Tenenbaums" managed to extract barely any laughs from a cast featuring Ben Stiller, Owen Wilson, and Bill Murray. Indeed, Baumbach collaborated on the script for Anderson's 2004 bomb, "The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou." "Margot" resembles a cross between Anderson's ostensibly comic but humorless movies and the seemingly somber yet ridiculous films like Todd Field's "Little Children." The common denominator appears to be young filmmakers who take their own intelligence a little too seriously. ■

Rated R for sexual content and language.

BOOKS

[*Richistan: A Journey Through the American Wealth Boom and the Lives of the New Rich*, Robert Frank, Crown, 2007, 288 pages]

The Greening of America

By John Zmirak

READING ROBERT FRANK'S *Richistan* reminded this rent-control kid from Queens of his first trip to the supermarket in Highland Park, a suburb of Dallas. After a lifetime spent straining to take down one out of maybe seven brands of cereal from dusty, crowded shelves, and squeezing through narrow aisles to pick between two kinds of milk (regular or skim), my maiden voyage to Whole Foods was an awakening. Who knew there could be so many varieties of baby greens? Or that lettuce, of any kind, could fetch \$7.50 a pound? The vast, spacious shelves attended by tanned and toned Dallasites groaned with organic, local, sustainable, and "eco-friendly foods." The carts were big, the aisles were wide, and your pricey provisions could be packed (your choice) in paper, plastic—or hemp! I learned at Whole Foods that goats give milk and that it's tasty—albeit \$3.50 per quart. As I left the store, I felt stunned by the sheer abundance of it all, like a recent arrival from the old Soviet Union. In my best Russian accent, I told the bohemian chick who checked me out, "I love Amerika!"

And I meant it. But there also lingered in me a sense of excess. Did one really need this many choices of chard, and was it really healthy to cultivate such delicate sensibilities? It's one thing to shop at farmers markets because you want to support the folks who grow apples in your area. It's quite another to learn how to care, really *care*, about

whether your sea salt comes from Brittany. C.S. Lewis dubbed such exquisite awareness the "higher gluttony," which consists not in excessive consumption but undue attention to food. He smelled it in vegetarians, food-faddists, and others who made of their bodies not so much a temple as a fetish.

Reading *Richistan* brought this memory to mind. The wry Robert Frank's study of the newly and often outrageously rich is thoughtful, funny, and frequently appalling. He follows the lifestyles and probes the souls of extraordinarily successful hedge-fund managers, Internet "instapreneurs" who cashed out before the NASDAQ crash, and at least one ceramic figurine magnate. These men and women live in gated communities or isolated estates, are attended by "concierge doctors," and use different airports than most of us for their teak-lined private jets. Frank describes them as citizens of another country altogether, the republic of Richistan.

Along the way, Frank raises issues of interest to policy wonks. He tracks the alarming growth of income inequality in America, noting the wage stagnation of the lower-middle and working classes alongside the burgeoning ranks of billionaires. He parallels the current explosion of astronomical wealth with historical moments when the "wealth gap" between the richest Americans and the rest of us yawned equally wide—the Gilded Age and the Roaring Twenties. Each period gave way to "progressive" reforms designed to redistribute that wealth, frequently through confiscatory taxation that funded the large-scale expansion of government. Frank plainly feels sympathetic to such reactions. This is disappointing, given the wealth of evidence provided by libertarian economists demonstrating that such redistribution tends to be self-defeating by inhibiting economic growth and that most regulation enshrines the power of existing economic giants and insulates them from market competition. In the end, measures such as Theodore Roosevelt took against the trusts and Franklin Roosevelt enacted to manage

the entire American economy (i.e. the National Recovery Act) ended up empowering not the common man but managerial elites—the sorts of people who are adept at rising in bureaucracies, be they corporate or governmental.

Frank is genially scathing about such excesses as wealth camps for sons and daughters of the privileged, where participants scoff at sums like a "mere" \$10 million, and playact how to someday inform their fiancées of the necessity of signing prenups. He goes into detail worthy of a gossip columnist on the Freudian competition among male software execs to build the biggest yacht—ending in 400-foot-plus monsters with their own Olympic-size swimming pools.

Perhaps to brighten his otherwise damning portrayal of a rising class that has little class, Frank finds men to admire. He is positively gushy on the subject of "socially conscious" magnates like the Colorado "Gang of Four," left-leaning entrepreneurs who worked together in the late 1990s to target socially conservative public officials and "take down the religious Right." (Unsurprisingly, we learn that two of the four are gay.) Indeed, Frank notes that while most of the merely "affluent"—folks with net wealth of just a few millions—tend to skew conservative or libertarian, as one climbs higher in the ranks of Richistan, the politics slant swiftly leftward. Frank views this phenomenon with approval, quoting "one education philanthropist" who says, "When you look at what I spend compared to what government spends on schools, it's like pissing in the wind." Frank goes on, "So to have impact, today's philanthropists also want a say in directing government funds." Translated, that means these magnates prefer to spend other people's money and are happy to use their own to grab political power so they can do good works on the taxpayer's dime. In case you ever wonder why the "Big New York Money," which Gen. Wesley Clark ruined his good name complaining about, doesn't just send money directly to fund its favorite international crusades, here's your answer: there's more

impact to be gained from buying or intimidating senators.

Frank makes no fine distinction between this sort of “social conscience” and the heroic efforts of Philip Berber, whom he colorfully describes as a “Jewish Irishman who now lives in Texas.” Shocked by poverty he saw once in Ethiopia, Berber is spending his considerable fortune digging wells and providing economic opportunities in a country ravaged by drought and decades of Communism. Still, Frank does a fine job of showing how businessmen like Berber—the real philanthropists depicted here—are revolutionizing the field of foreign aid, demanding fiscal accountability of NGOs, and squeezing out the waste endemic to such assistance.

But the heart of the book lies outside the political realm and goes to questions of culture. Frank points up vividly the difference between families possessing “Old Money” and new arrivals in Richistan. Of course, there’s the difference in taste: old families tend to hide their wealth, invest conservatively, seek leisure, and cultivate a quiet interest in the arts. Richistanis compete to own the largest estate in Palm Beach, continue to sweat 14-hour days to accumulate that next \$100 million, and view artworks as commodities. Frank blithely reports the existence, which I confess I find alarming, of the Mei Moses Fine Art Index, which “aggregates the prices of artworks that have been sold publicly at least twice over their lifetimes.” He points out, “it has handily outperformed stocks in the past five years.”

But then, new money has always been vulgar, and it has always taken a decade or two to turn filthy lucre into social and cultural prestige. European nobility began as warlords wearing bearskins and the Medicis as *arriviste* usurers who endowed Renaissance painters to outdo the aristocrats. The Kennedys, before establishing Camelot, founded their fortune on bathtub gin, and their political ambition was fueled in part by Joseph Sr.’s rage at his exclusion from the ranks of Boston Brahmins. It would seem natural to expect that Richistanis

would proceed through the same process of assimilation to the cultural norms of the established wealthy classes and gradually shed their extravagance in favor of Old Moneyed reticence and civility.

Except that those norms no longer exist—or at any rate, the Richistanis don’t care about them. As Frank recounts, when today’s newly rich encounter exclusion at the hands of established elites, they don’t bother toning down their behavior and attempting to “pass” by aping the ways of those who came before them. Instead, they found their own country clubs, throw their own higher priced and hence more prestigious charity events, and thumb their noses at the old farts in J. Press jackets who furrow their eyebrows at the glare from a \$40,000 wristwatch. Nor does the second moneyed generation feel pressure to conform. The old guard, according to Rockefeller cousin Nelson Aldrich, honed the mores and morals of its youth at boarding schools. Frank quotes Aldrich on the prevailing ethos of these schools: “When I grew up, the ethical tradition was this weird combination of Christianity and manliness. There was a heavy emphasis on sports, especially the most painful sports, like ice hockey and football. It was all about stoicism and patience under great stress.” At his parents’ insistence, Aldrich spent his summers at jobs that entailed digging trenches or tending bodies at the morgue. Whatever the shortcomings—which have been endlessly detailed in resentful novels and snarky films—of this old “way of the WASP,” such stoicism had its virtues. But it no longer shapes the scions of Richistan. In fact, as Frank relates, “nearly 40 percent of today’s millionaires give their kids unregulated access” to their inheritances.

The outcome is easy to sum up in four bitter syllables: Paris Hilton. ■

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[The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century, Alex Ross, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 624 pages]

Modern Classics

By R.J. Stove

The glamour of the anarchist and the mystery of the sphinx have begun to pall, and we are faced with the unenviable task of making constructive effort and plain statement appear interesting.

—Constant Lambert, British composer and musicologist (1905-1951)

DAUNTINGLY YOUTHFUL (how dare anyone not born till 1968 be so accomplished?), Alex Ross has grown into one of the two best English-language writers on classical music now alive, the other being Berkeley academic Richard Taruskin. But it implies no diminution of Ross’s formidable prose abilities—quite the reverse—to observe that they could never have attained full fruition outside *The New Yorker*. That magazine has provided Ross with what Orwell called “leisure and wood pulp,” in a way that few if any other mass-circulation periodicals could imagine permitting. Both privileges are essential for a writer like Ross, who thinks in paragraphs more than in sentences and in sections more than in paragraphs. One simply cannot believe that Ross experienced much authorial contentment in his four-year *New York Times* stint during the 1990s nor that any other newspaper these days would suit his talent better.

Written as much “for those who feel passing curiosity” about 20th-century classical music as for those already conversant with it (Ross eschews staff notation musical extracts, for example), *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century*, shows a refreshing impatience with the teleological heresy. “Histories of music since 1900,” Ross observes, “often take the form of a teleological tale, a goal-obsessed narrative

full of great leaps forward and heroic battles with the philistine bourgeoisie. When the concept of progress assumes exaggerated importance, many works are struck from the historical record on the grounds that they have nothing new to say." Actually this is not even the half of it. Those of us whose university music training dates from the Cold War recall what governed most of our lecturers: not merely "the concept of progress" but full-blown Gnosticism, in which the more repulsive a composer sounded to the general public, the more meritorious he had to be. Such Gnosticism is hardly unknown to the other arts, or unique to leftists. Witness the CIA-subsidized efforts to proclaim Jackson Pollock an anti-totalitarian master. Yet it has flourished with particular malignity in musical fields, if only because so few musicians read books and because they therefore almost never learn how historically illiterate their "sensitive-persecuted-artist" default position really is. They cannot be blamed for accepting such illiteracy when their profession's treasonous clerks encourage it. "To hell with the public and with the performers, too," snapped veteran composer Elliott Carter, a beneficiary of Congress for Cultural Freedom support. When Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck* received ovations at its 1925 premier, T.W. Adorno characteristically consoled Berg over his success. *Wozzeck's* ability to generate applause meant, for Adorno and to a lesser extent for Berg himself, that it must be an artistic failure.

This reasoning—if reasoning it may optimistically be called—also motivated the relentless belittlement of Sibelius by Adorno and his acolytes, including René Leibowitz, who squandered his creative energies on grinding out a pamphlet called *Sibelius: The Worst Composer in the World*. (Others, less bold than Leibowitz, simply omitted Sibelius altogether from their "histories" of music.) Ross's finest achievements include his extended homage—originally printed as a *New Yorker* essay—to the reticent Finn, whose grateful countrymen made him into a national monument unrivaled

until the advent of Nokia cell phones. Curious to realize afresh, through Ross's pages, how narrow Sibelius's geographical appeal has mostly been. Even while alive, he provoked little interest within Continental Europe, Scandinavia always excepted. Against his lack of wider European renown, though, must be weighed the outright adoration he inspired in Britain and America: from none more than Olin Downes, *New York Times* music correspondent from 1924-55, who exhibited toward Sibelius's output a love not merely proprietorial but almost obstetric. In one letter to his hero, he transmitted greetings from elsewhere on the Downes domestic front: "My mother ... asked me again about the Eighth Symphony. ... 'Tell Mr. Sibelius that I am not concerned or anxious so much about his Eighth Symphony, which I know he will complete in his own good time, as about his *Ninth*.'" Nagging by music critics is quite fearsome enough; pity the musician thus nagged by music critics' mothers. As it happens, Sibelius not only failed to start his Ninth Symphony, but never released his Eighth. Gripped by self-doubt that eventually turned into consuming self-disgust, he committed the Eighth's manuscript to the flames.

Several other composers receive comprehensive treatment from Ross, none more effectively than the youngish Richard Strauss, who dominates Ross's first chapter, a glittering evocation of *Mitteleuropa* before 1914. Something of the contempt that oozes forth from the average journalist's descriptions of Strauss's subsequent purported cowardice under Nazism (with a Jewish daughter-in-law and an openly implacable foe in Goebbels, Strauss had reason not to shoot his mouth off) had already emerged in the century's earlier years, when pundits wrung their hands in righteous consternation at the spectacle of Strauss making money. "More of a stock company than a genius," Karl Kraus snarled. Mahler, whose own attitude toward Strauss alternated between love-hate and hate-hate, privately commented with typical messianic ardor:

"My time will come when his is up." Any music lover with the slightest historical awareness will find this grudge-match tiresomely reminiscent of the 19th century's sterile Brahms-versus-Wagner antagonism, but Mahler's more besotted worshipers happily welcomed it. Strauss's real sin lay in his inability to seem nobler, more disinterested, or more humanitarian than he was. He can be called, if you like, the Lord Melbourne of music. Such late, serene Strauss masterpieces as *Capriccio* illustrate the truth of Ross's unfashionable contention: "proximity to terror does not obligate the artist to make terror his subject. ... There is much to be said for the artwork that answers horror by rejecting or transcending it."

In the U.S., composers—notwithstanding FDR's dreams of Caesarism—needed neither to reject nor to transcend horror; they simply occupied innumerable points on the artistic spectrum between populism of various sorts (Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber) and the most opaque introversion (Milton Babbitt, the aforementioned Elliott Carter). Ross's chapters on America, although not his finest, give the impression of having been the most enjoyable to write. Occasional faddishness mars them, notably the ascription of artistic stature to Marxist and black supremacist W.E.B. DuBois. But this matters little beside Ross's obvious, although clear-sighted, affection for his native land, and his parade of once cherished American musicians. We meet George Antheil, who became the subject of a volume by Ezra Pound, whose *Ballet Mécanique* includes parts for three airplane propellers, and who patented, along with Hedy Lamarr, frequency-hopping spread-spectrum radio transmission. We meet Roy Harris, the Oklahoma truck driver whose Third Symphony won evanescent but spectacular fame in the 1940s. We meet Leo Ornstein, "the Keyboard Terror," who repeatedly banged piano keys with his forearms and who despite, or because of, such exertions reached the age of 108. Ross is intrepid enough to concede the sheer racial spite animating

America's more obviously millenarian modernists, such as Edgard Varèse (who shared Goebbels' opinions of jazz's origins) and nonagenarian bigot Carl Ruggles (who cheerfully described Copland's circle as "a filthy bunch of Juilliard Jews"). It becomes more regrettable, then, that Ross's account of Charles Ives never steps beyond nativist cliché. What price must Ives, the Great Avant-Garde Visionary, pay now that he is known—as Ross admits—to have backdated his manuscripts in the hope of making them seem more novel than they were and since his significance stands or falls wholly upon his reputation for having beaten European avant-gardists to the punch?

and why should we not?) scorned to compose anything except lightly coded allusions to his erotic tastes. Can anyone lastingly admire Britten's post-1950 music who does not share these tastes? It appears as if Ross himself has failed to detect precisely how damning his own evidence is to hopes of Britten's durable greatness: he quotes a biographer's assessment of Britten being "emotionally frozen at the age of thirteen." This could never be said of Copland and Barber, homosexuals both, who nonetheless kept their private lives out of their creativity, in a manner that Britten disdained to do.

Possibly such objections are mere carping in the face of Ross's magisterial

pitchfork through the front door, is letting it creep in via the back. No other explanation readily occurs for Ross's complete omission of Ottorino Respighi, Italy's best composer from the generation after Puccini's, and a figure traduced with boring repetition by modernist apparatchiks as "reactionary." At least similarly traduced Brits, notably Sir Arnold Bax and Sir William Walton, make fleeting appearances in Ross's text, though their equally able compatriot Edmund Rubbra does not. Perhaps the truth that British music (in Ross's words) "has no tragic past attached to it, no stain of totalitarian aesthetics" means that it interests Ross less than does music from societies that Nazism and Communism enslaved. This would tie in with Respighi's neglect. Mussolini's musical program was mild stuff indeed by Hitlerite or Stalinist—let alone Maoist—standards, and it routinely championed compositions banned across the Alps as "degenerate."

Ross writes with the stylistic panache once displayed by Virgil Thomson at the *New York Herald Tribune*, but shows incomparably higher principles in his judgments. (Thomson—as we know today but did not know in his lifetime—operated a genteel protection racket, sparing musicians his nastiest invective, provided they performed his own works.) As has often been remarked, the chief criterion for any book on music is this: does it make readers want to hear, or rehear, the scores described in it? This test Ross's book passes with abundant ease, helped by its freedom from deforming ideological agendas. Near the end of *The Rest Is Noise*, Ross confesses, "the temptation is strong to see the overall [musical] trajectory as one of steep decline. From 1900-2000, the art experienced what can only be described as a fall from a great height." Such un-Thomsonian honesty will give scant comfort to any Whigs still in our midst, but helps to indicate why Ross can be trusted. ■

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WHAT PRICE MUST IVES PAY NOW THAT HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE BACKDATED HIS MANUSCRIPTS IN THE HOPE OF MAKING THEM SEEM MORE NOVEL THAN THEY WERE?

More disappointing than Ross's undue reverence for Ives's crankery are his accounts of two composers with greater claims to magnitude: Shostakovich and Benjamin Britten. Ross's discussion of the former is haunted by the specter of Shostakovich's posthumously published "memoirs." These, Ross himself explained in a 2004 *New Yorker* article, were pitilessly shown long ago by biographer Laurel E. Fay to be as bogus a construct as Piltdown Man. Even if Fay had not exposed their genesis, the implausibility of their portrait of Shostakovich as a satirical anti-Communist dissident should have been manifest from the facts that he died in bed and avoided the gulag. Soviet tyrants jailed and killed genuine satirists, in case you hadn't noticed. Mere Shostakovichian complaining about personal inconveniences suffered under a regime does not a dissident make.

With Britten (a friend of Shostakovich's, incidentally), the case is obviously different, but the outcome of Ross's researches is equally troubling. Not only does Britten seem to have spent his entire adult life with homosexuality on the brain, but after about 1950, he increasingly (if we can believe Ross,

analyses elsewhere. He possesses a special knack for conveying a composer's idiom within a handful of lines. Mexico's short-lived Silvestre Revueltas is vividly portrayed as having moved, in one late work, "from purposefully kitschy dance episodes to stretches of openhearted Romantic lamentation and on to a scary Mayan bacchanal that spills over into polyrhythmic mayhem." Of Paul Hindemith: "The archetypal Hindemith piece takes the form of a fast, furious, off-kilter march, with fanfares in multiple tonalities and bass lines bent off course. The music is intense, but it does not take itself particularly seriously, or seriously at all." Exactly so. And who but Ross would compare *Wozzeck*'s finale to "the hard-driving two-chord ostinato" near the beginning of *Porgy and Bess*? Talking of Gershwin, the story is told that Gershwin, having asked Stravinsky to give him lessons, admitted to earning a six-figure income, whereupon Stravinsky replied, "In that case, I should study with you." Alas, Ross tells us that this anecdote "is probably legend."

Sometimes the fear arises that Ross, even after expelling teleology with a

[*The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control*, Abraham H. Foxman, Palgrave Macmillan, 256 pages]

In Search of Anti-Semitism

By Michael C. Desch

ABRAHAM FOXMAN, the National Director of the Anti-Defamation League and one of Israel's most ardent proponents in America, has a big problem. Actually, he has three problems. Critics of Israel, both Jewish and gentile, no longer reside exclusively on the fringes of American politics, but are now coalescing in the political center around policymakers and scholars who cannot simply be dismissed as cranks and bigots. Moreover, the connection of American Jews with Israel, particularly those under 35 years of age, is flagging. Finally, the moral and strategic case for Israel has become harder to make.

The challenges of sustaining an uncompromising pro-Israel stance are fully apparent in Foxman's latest book, *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control*. Ironically, it is now people like Foxman who are no longer in the mainstream in America because they have to embrace extreme positions and employ questionable strategies to silence their critics.

Foxman's first problem is that critical voices about Israel are now heard in the mainstream of American society, and he devotes the bulk of *The Deadliest Lies* to trying to discredit them. He and the ADL were, for example, among the most strident opponents of John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's much discussed essay, "The Israel Lobby." *The Deadliest Lies* was released on the same day as their book-length version of the essay, a scholarly work with almost 1,400 footnotes. Yet Foxman's response runs long on mischaracterization—the authors never argue that the Jewish lobby acts as a cabal undermining U.S. foreign policy—

and guilt by association—David Duke's name comes up a number of times—but short on substantive critique. He relies inordinately upon instant criticisms of the original article others cobbled together rather than his own sustained analysis. Using hot language like "bigoted" and "bias" is hardly fair treatment of two distinguished scholars with no history of anti-Jewish animus.

Another target is former President Jimmy Carter, who earned pro-Israel activists' ire by writing a book entitled *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*. Foxman is outraged that the former president could compare Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories to the South African white-minority government's oppression of the black majority. But this analogy is widely employed among Israelis themselves in newspapers like *Ha'aretz* and is hardly evidence of anti-Semitism. Moreover, of all that American presidents have done for Israel since Harry Truman recognized it in 1948, Carter's efforts to broker the Camp David peace agreement with Egypt ranks among the most important in terms of enhancing the security of the Jewish state.

The final object of Foxman's wrath is the distinguished New York University historian Tony Judt. His crime, in Foxman's judgment, is that he thinks that the prolonged Israeli occupation of the West Bank has become irreversible, so now only a binational Jewish and Arab state remains as a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Certainly, this proposal is controversial, and reasonable people can disagree with it. I do. But Foxman goes way beyond reasoned debate, dismissing Judt as a bigot and an extremist. The charge seems especially ludicrous when one learns that Judt is Jewish, lived in Israel for a time, and even served in the Israel Defense Forces.

The best measure of Foxman's desperation is the lengths he is willing to go to shut down critics of Israel. In an incident much discussed in New York intellectual circles, a private group rented space in the Polish Consulate to host a talk by Judt in October 2006. After numerous phone calls from the ADL and

other Jewish organizations, the Polish Counsel decided to cancel the event. Foxman's implausible account of his own role in the affair makes it sound like the ADL staffers called merely to get directions to the talk. The Polish Counsel, in contrast, characterized the calls as "delicate pressure," an interpretation that is bolstered by Foxman's pointed discussion of Poland's culpability in the Holocaust in *The Deadliest Lies*.

Foxman's uncompromising pro-Israel agenda has thrown his moral compass off kilter. The American Jewish community was divided by the October 2007 effort in the House of Representatives to pass a resolution condemning Turkey's genocide against the Armenians between 1915-18. Foxman opposed this resolution because Turkey is the only Muslim state allied with Israel. He even fired a regional director of the ADL, Andrew Tarsy, after he characterized Foxman's position as "morally indefensible" and endorsed the resolution. The subsequent outcry forced Foxman to rescind his decision.

Consider also Foxman's problems within the American Jewish community. To be sure, over 80 percent of American Jews regard themselves as "pro-Israel," and less than 15 percent express any discomfort in supporting the Jewish state. But a 2007 study of Jewish-American public opinion underwritten by the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, "Beyond Distancing: Young Adult American Jews and Their Alienation from Israel," nonetheless concludes that there is "a growing distancing from Israel of American Jews."

Surprisingly, this has less to do with an individual's politics—the greatest level of "alienation" was manifest among younger "right-leaning" Jews—and more to do with age. Diminished support for Israel and willingness to date and marry outside the faith are both substantively and significantly greater among younger American Jews. Indeed, the authors of the report, Stephen M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman, link the two, arguing that intermarriage fosters a more "personalized" religious and cultural identity that, in turn, reduces the individual's connection

with the Jewish collective, both here in America and abroad in Israel.

Even the good news in the report—that the overwhelming majority of American Jews remain supportive of the Jewish state—needs qualification: only 28 percent of respondents identified themselves as “pro-Zionist.” Zionism goes beyond mere support for Israel and embraces the notion that Jews can only lead a normal existence in a Jewish state. This lack of support for Zionism leads Cohen and Kelman to conclude, “many American Jews are claiming or reclaiming their identities as proud, equal Diaspora Jews who do not necessarily believe that Israel is the center and America the periphery of global Judaism.” Advocates of assimilation like Philip Weiss, rather than Zionists like Foxman, are much closer to the mainstream among American Jews in this regard, at least in terms of their actual behavior.

But this survey also highlights the two interrelated factors that constitute the remaining hard core of modern collective Jewish identity in America. Eighty-seven percent of American Jews worry that there is either “a great deal” or a “moderate amount” of anti-Semitism in America today. And the overwhelming majority think this will persist or become worse. Paradoxically, they hold such views despite the fact that only 21 percent report experiencing anti-Semitism personally over the last year.

That overwhelming numbers of American Jews are pessimistic about their standing in America today despite rarely experiencing anti-Semitism personally is no doubt related to the second factor: 85 percent agree or strongly agree that “the Holocaust has deeply affected” them. In other words, despite increasing assimilation through intermarriage and overwhelming evidence that most are content to remain in the Diaspora here in America, there remains an existential angst among Jewish Americans that their place in American society remains tenuous. It is such fears that people like Foxman increasingly have to stoke to maintain high levels of support for Israel among American Jews, a strategy clearly employed in one

of his previous books, *Never Again? The Threat of the New Anti-Semitism*.

In *The Deadliest Lies*, Foxman calls the Holocaust “history’s single greatest crime,” ignoring the facts that the Nazis killed far more gentile non-combatants than Jews during World War II and that Stalin’s and Mao’s mass killings far outpaced Hitler’s. One has to wonder whether his unwillingness to call what happened to the Armenians a genocide was also part of an effort to portray Jewish suffering as unique.

Foxman’s final problem is that the case for Israel is no longer as strong as it once was. The threat to Israel’s existence, never as great as many thought, is today clearly manageable. True, Syria still demands that Israel return the Golan Heights. Fundamentalist Iran appears to be pursuing a rudimentary nuclear capability, and its president uses very disturbing rhetoric. And Lebanon remains a failed state that hosts anti-Israeli groups like Hezbollah. But in many other respects, Israel’s security situation is much improved. Israel has durable peace treaties with former adversaries Egypt and Jordan and is even closely allied with Muslim Turkey. The Jewish state also has the most modern military in the region. In the unlikely event that its conventional defense fails, Israel has a robust nuclear deterrent, reportedly as large as that of Britain and France. The argument that Israel needs unquestioning American support to ensure its survival is a much harder sell than it was in the past.

Israel’s behavior is also increasingly difficult to defend morally. There is an overwhelming consensus that the essential foundation of a just and workable Arab-Israeli peace is the establishment of a Palestinian state in most of the occupied territories. One of the key obstacles to this is the Israeli settlements there. Defenders of Israel argue that continuing Palestinian terrorism and rocket attacks from Gaza make further withdrawals from the West Bank risky. Ongoing Palestinian violence against Israel is counter-productive, but Israel’s promises to trade land for peace seem hollow when Jewish settlers establish a perma-

nent presence in what almost everyone agrees should be the future Palestine.

In the past, Israel has captured the moral high ground arguing that it wages war reluctantly and then only with the greatest care for innocent lives. But since Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982, this image of “purity of arms” has been tarnished. Suppressing the al-Aksa Intifada, Israeli forces employed massive firepower, which took the lives of four Palestinians for every Israeli life lost, according to the respected Israeli human rights group B’Tselem. Israel’s summer of 2006 war against Lebanon, whatever its initial justification after Hezbollah’s kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers, soon became an excessively punitive war that claimed over 1,000 lives.

By the debauched standards of the Middle East, where cruel dictators often use force to suppress opponents, Israel’s behavior is not particularly egregious. But given the claims to extraordinary virtue that Israelis and their American supporters make, revelations of ethnic cleansing in 1948, executions of hundreds of Arab prisoners of war in 1956 and 1967, and the use of human shields and indiscriminate force during the two Intifadas have made the moral case for Israel more difficult to make.

Foxman and other reflexive pro-Israel activists today face an uphill fight among American Jews and the rest of American society. Increasingly, their only hope is to convince Jews that despite their successful integration into American life, their position remains shaky and unqualified support for Israel is essential because it is their “ultimate refuge in time of need.” Thus Foxman and others seek to discredit critics of Israel by distorting their arguments and portraying them as fringe figures. But despite his best efforts to tar dissenters as extremists, it is Foxman and other unqualified supporters of Israel who are outside the mainstream. ■

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PROFILE

Robinson Jeffers: Peace Poet

By Justin Raimondo

A CELEBRATED American bard, hailed by the critics as the bright shining star of the “California poets,” delivers the manuscript of his long awaited book, and his publisher—a major source of much of the nation’s literary cachet—sends a note chirping merrily that “the whole staff is buzzing with anticipation.” That buzz, however, soon turns to a growl as the author’s antiwar views come under their disapproving scrutiny.

Even as editor reassures author “how meaningful and important every word you wrote has been to me,” he is nonetheless “disturbed and terribly worried” about those “frequent damning references” to the president. The book, the editor sadly concludes, “will feed the prejudices of the wrong people, especially those who have tried so hard and so vindictively to discredit him.”

The poet’s work is subjected to severe editing. Entire poems—10 in all—are excised. When the volume is finally published, it bears an extraordinary editorial note averring, “in all fairness to that constantly interdependent relationship, and in all candor,” the publisher “feels compelled to go on record with its disagreement over some of the political views pronounced by the poet in this volume.” The editor’s note concludes with the smug self-assurance of one who knows his reiteration of the conventional wisdom renders him practically unassailable: “Time alone,” he intones, “is the court of last resort in the case of ideas on trial.”

It’s a tale for our times. The persecution of a liberal artist by conservative philistines and ideologues, the author a victim of the Bush cult, right? No? Well, then, it must be the story of some fellow-traveling Dalton Trumbo-like figure out

of the McCarthy era, whose poetry of a slightly pinkish hue got him called on the carpet. Wrong again.

The poet is Robinson Jeffers, poet laureate of the Old Right, whose censored volume of verse, *The Double Axe*, published in 1946, shocked his longtime editors at Random House, where Bennett Cerf would not countenance reference to “the cripple’s power-need of Roosevelt.” In “The Love and the Hate,” a long narrative poem that did pass the censor’s test, Jeffers conjured a dead soldier who comes back to haunt his parents. Incorporating virtually all the political themes of the pre-war conservative opposition, the boy-corpse mourns the present fate of

The decent and loyal people of
America,
Caught by their own loyalty,
fouled, gouged and bled
To feed the power-hunger of politicians
and make trick fortunes
For swindlers and collaborators.

Not missing a beat, the poet peers into an ominous yet strangely hopeful future:

For a time’s coming—fairly soon,
you’ll not see it—when the ends
of the earth,
from east and west, one world,
will close on your country
Like the jaws of a trap; but people
will say, be quiet, we
were fooled before. We know
that all governments
Are thugs and liars, let them fight
their own battles; and
the trap is closing, and an angry
spirit
Will go through the camps whispering
mutiny in conscripts’ ears ...

Jeffers’s vatic vision is our present, down to the angry spirit whispering mutiny: his uncanny premonitions elevate his poetry to the realm of prophecy.

Known for his violent, searing imagery, which was usually the instrument of a merciless insight into the tragedy of the human persona—its narcissism, its narrowness, its primordial viciousness—Jeffers’s gaze, as war

approached, was turned on the follies of the “radio parrots,” “the crackpot dreams of Jeanne d’Arc and Hitler,” and “the paralytic Roosevelt”—all phrases cut by the editors of Random House. Delving into Jeffers’s molten rush of imagery, we see the world through the eyes of an intransigent “isolationist” in the midst of the post-war triumphalism. In “Fantasy,” Jeffers jolts his readers—then and now—by juxtaposing the German and American warlords as future objects of obloquy:

Roosevelt, Hitler and Guy Fawkes
Hanged above the garden walks,
While the happy children cheer,
Without hate, without fear,
And new men plot a new war.

That, too, was cut, and yet the rest was no less unforgiving. “Powerful and armed, neutral in the midst of madness, we might have held / the whole world’s balance and stood / Like a mountain in a wind,” wrote Jeffers, shortly before the war began. The craggy-faced poet’s perspective reflected the dominant view among conservatives of the time and also their sense that it was too late to do anything about it: “We were misled and took sides. We have / chosen to share the crime and the punishment.”

The chorus of jeers that rose up from the critics was deafening: “A necrophilic nightmare!” declared *Time* magazine. “His violent, hateful book is a gospel of isolationism carried beyond geography, faith or hope,” scolded the *Library Journal*. The *Milwaukee Journal* concurred: “In this truculent book, Robinson Jeffers ... makes it clear that he feels the human race should be abolished.” His critical reputation shattered on the rocks of the postwar One-World consensus, the poet never regained his former stature. As William Everson wrote in the foreword to the 1977 edition: “Hustled out of decent society with antiseptics and rubber gloves, *The Double Axe* was universally consigned to oblivion, effectively ending Jeffers’ role as a creditable poetic voice during his lifetime.”

It was a long way to fall. In 1932, Jeffers’s visage, seemingly chiseled from

granite cliffs of his beloved California coastline, gazed out from the cover of *Time* magazine. Acclaimed by critics as America's foremost poet, Jeffers's career had taken off after the publication, in 1924, of *Tamar and Other Poems*, which, for *The Nation*'s Mark van Doren, evoked "the beauty and strength which belongs to genius alone," while James Daly in *Poetry*, declared Jeffers "unsurpassed by any other poet writing in English."

The poet's self-published book was republished the next year, by Boni and Liviwright, as *Roan Stallion, Tamar, and Other Poems*, with two additional long narrative poems of the sort that came to be associated with the Jeffers style. The poet's course was set.

Jeffers had a powerful sense of place: his poems seemed carved out of the flinty solemnity of the northern California shore. As Loren Eisley put it: "The seabeaten coast, the fierce freedom of its hunting hawks, possessed and spoke through him. It was one of the most uncanny and complete relationships between a man and his natural background that I know in literature."

Jeffers's evocations of the Big Sur coastline, with its craggy beauty and eternally gray skies, are today often mistaken for paeans to a simplistic pantheism. Yet the sweeping vistas were but backdrop to searing portraits of the people who inhabited this forbidding country of towering rocks, cold mists, and shrieking hawks. His narratives had about them an air of Greek tragedy, a classical beauty of form and theme that gave expression to Jeffers' unique vision of humankind as a tragically flawed creature whose base cleverness contrasted with, and even defiled, the impersonal majesty of the natural world.

Jeffers and his wife Una had come to Carmel in 1914, when it was a veritable wilderness. There the poet apprenticed himself to a stone mason and built a cottage and a two-and-a-half story tower made of boulders brought by horse from a nearby rock quarry and hauled up from the beach with his own hands. Tor House stood low, clinging to the bare

promontory of rock—or "tor"—that meets the sea like the "prow and plunging cutwater" of a ship, as Jeffers put it. Hawk Tower rose high over the waves, gazing out at the limitless horizon. Until his death in 1962, a steady stream of poetic polemics and prophecies sallied forth from the solitude of that stone tower that would delight, scandalize, astonish, and finally anger and alienate.

The politics that horrified the critics in 1946 had been present from the beginning, although they did not offend quite so much in the 1920s, when "Shine, Perishing Republic" saw print:

While this America settles in the
mould of its vulgarity, heavily
thickening
to empire

And protest, only a bubble in the
molten mass, pops and sighs
out, and the
mass hardens,

I sadly smiling remember that the
flower fades to make fruit, the
fruit rots
to make earth.

Out of the mother; and through
the spring exultances, ripeness
and decadence;
and home to the mother.

The organic fate of all republics is empire and inevitable decay: "home to the mother," back to the deep dark earth, whose loamy embrace awaits us all. There is about this poem the clarity of a premonitory dream: "and protest, only a bubble in the molten mass, pops and sighs out." How eloquently this speaks to our present helplessness as we resign ourselves to our rulers' imperial delusions and hurtle down the road to yet another war. Yet it is useless to despair, Jeffers counsels:

Life is good, be it stubbornly long
or suddenly

A mortal splendor: meteors are
not needed less than mountains:
shine, perishing republic.

This slide into the abyss is as natural as life itself, which can only end in death. All civilizations, like all human

beings, rise up, flower, and ripen and decay, returning to the earth from whence they sprang. Even the mighty American Empire sinks into over-ripeness and begins to rot. We all go home to the Mother. Still, the stench of it offended Jeffers's nostrils, and he became a bit of a recluse:

But for my children, I would have
them keep their distance from
the thickening
center; corruption

Never has been compulsory, when
the cities lie at the monster's
feet there
are left the mountains."

A sign outside Tor House warned away uninvited guests, and Jeffers regularly turned away would-be acolytes who came to sit at the feet of the poet. He was temperamentally unsuited to the demands of a following and besides, that was a futile path to tread, as the poet pointed out:

And boys, be in nothing so moderate
as in love of man, a clever
servant,
insufferable master.

There is the trap that catches
noblest spirits, that caught—
they say—
God, when he walked on earth."

Yet the poet could not avoid the trap himself. Years later—"Watching the blood-red moon droop slowly / into black sea thought burst of dry lightning and distant thunder"—the threat of another world war reared its ugly head in Danzig, where the "sick child" Hitler, on Sept. 19, 1939, was "invoking destruction and wailing at it," and the day was

A poem: but too much
Like one of Jeffers's, crusted with
blood and barbaric omens,
Painful to excess, inhuman as a
hawk's cry.

"The Day is a Poem" appeared in *Be Angry at the Sun*, written in the run-up to war and published in 1941, a volume that provoked an uneasiness in the critics and the literary world in general.

"Come Little Birds" depicts a sibyl-like woman who conjures the spirits of the dead. As her sons light a bonfire and the ghosts come crowding around it, one cries out

'God curse every man that makes war or plants it.' (This was in nineteen twenty, about two years after the armistice.) 'God curse every congressman that voted it. God curse Wilson.'

The poet Stanley Kunitz warned Jeffers that if he didn't get with the program, and "accept moral obligations and human values," he would "range himself on the side of the destroyers." The Marxist critics of the New Masses and the fellow-traveling press, who had initially embraced Jeffers's poetry because they mistook it for an indictment of "decadent" capitalism, noted his lack of

"social consciousness"—and, of course, disdained his antiwar stance, which no longer suited the party line.

Jeffers did not care that the literary commissars had expelled him: he had never joined their ranks to begin with, having been a registered Republican all through the darkest days of the New Deal. With stoic endurance, he looked down at his "socially concerned" critics from a very great height. "Corruption and empire" were inevitable: one might as well "be angry at the sun" for setting. Still, he had to play his part in the drama as it unfolded:

The gang serves lies, the passionate
Man plays his part; the cold passion for truth
Hunts in no pack.

The tortured voice of a modern Cassandra rose up from his tower of stone, hard, unyielding, even as he chided himself for the sheer futility of it:

You are not Catullus, you know,
To lampoon these crude sketches
of Caesar. You are far
From Dante's feet, but even farther
from his dirty
Political hatreds.
Let boys want pleasure, and men
Struggle for power, and women
perhaps for fame,
And the servile to serve a Leader
and the dupes to be duped.

In 1941, Jeffers was invited by the Library of Congress to go on a nationwide lecture tour, which took him to Washington, Princeton, Harvard, Columbia, Buffalo, Indianapolis, Kansas City, and Salt Lake City, and he was far from shy in speaking out on the issue of the day. This hardly endeared him to the Marxist critics or the Roosevelt administration, and the cries of horror went up and out. Jeffers was even accused of having fascist sympathies, but his stern voice was neither deterred nor silenced.

Against the "emerging Caesarism that binds republics with brittle iron," his was a lonely voice crying out against "the age of decline and abnormal violence," when men are "frightened and

herded increasingly into lumps and masses." The fear that was spreading like an evil mist was paralyzing our ability to reason, because "a frightened man cannot think and the mass mind does not want truth, only democratic or Aryan or Marxian or other colored truth." However, "the truth will not die," and mankind may even find it again. Conflict was inherent in the nature of man, "much more than baboon or wolf," and yet "a clear shift of meaning and emphasis from man to not-man can make him whole."

While Jeffers wrote political poetry, he was hardly a mere polemicist. His views were rooted in his essentially conservative view of human nature, which he insisted on calling "Inhumanism," perhaps as a goad to the "humanist" liberals who had hopped on the war bandwagon with such alacrity. "Inhumanism," as Jeffers defined it, had nothing to do with being inhuman and everything to do with his allegiance to the permanent things, such as the transhuman magnificence of creation. "Turn away from each other to that great presence to which humanity is only a squirming particle," he advised his audience on his 1941 tour. "Love your neighbor as yourself, that is, not excessively if you are adult and normal, but God with all your heart and mind and soul. Turn outward from each other as far as need and kindness permit to the vast life and inexhaustible beauty beyond humanity."

Commonly misperceived as, alternately, the pantheist precursor of the California sandal-and-beads set and the misanthropic "inhumanist," Jeffers was none of these things. If "time alone is the court of last resort in the case of ideas on trial," as the editors of Random House would have it, then, by this standard, Jeffers was a seer of singular insight, whose divinatory art has survived the transient fashions of politics and stood the test of time. ■

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Ends Against the Middle

Are the Democrats really the party of the rich? Well, they certainly are the party of the plutocratic chatterers, from Robert Rubin to George Soros on the east

coast, to David Geffen and the Googlers on the west coast. Meanwhile, in the heartland, Warren Buffett holds lonely liberal court.

And they all, of course, read the *New York Times*, still a rich man's publication, even if the Sulzbergers themselves are fading fast. Yes, plenty of rich Republicans remain, but even among their ranks, many of the old GOP dynasties—Rockefeller, Heinz, Harriman—are now notably Democratic.

The phenomenon of limousine liberals has been around since the '60s—ever since the Ford Foundation started funding radical multiculturalists, ever since Leonard Bernstein hosted a fundraiser for the Black Panthers, ever since rich liberals such as Teddy Kennedy embraced forced busing while sending their own kids to private schools. In 2005, Michael Barone took note of “the trustfunder left”; the San Francisco Bay Area, for example, voted 70 percent for John Kerry, while on the other coast, Kerry picked up 73 percent of the Martha's Vineyard vote. In addition, the 2004 Democratic presidential nominee won such rich nomad spots as Aspen, Sun Valley, and Boulder.

On Nov. 5 of this year, in a *Financial Times* op-ed, The Heritage Foundation's Michael Franc calculated that Democrats now represent the majority of the nation's wealthiest Congressional districts. “More than half of the wealthiest households are concentrated in the 18 states where Democrats control both Senate seats,” Franc observed—which would include, of course, such obviously affluent states as New York, New

Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, California, and Washington.

Franc's findings provoked a furious reaction. “Silly New Wingnut Meme: Democrats Are The ‘Party Of The Rich’” headlined TalkingPointsMemo.com. DailyKos.com was similarly nasty. Those two liberal websites, of course, are more notable for their Democratic partisanship than for any consistently leftist ideology. So naturally, they sought to inoculate the Democrats from the charge that they now belong to bloggers and billionaires—that being precisely the thesis of Matt Bai's recent book, *The Argument: Billionaires, Bloggers, and the Battle to Remake Democratic Politics*.

Bai is a reporter for the *New York Times*, and that's probably the only reason he got close enough to his subjects to hear them refer to evangelical Christians as “lizardheads” who live in “Dumbf---istan.” To be sure, Democrats have no monopoly on arrogance or asperity, but it is a Democratic Congress now that is showing no interest in closing the obvious capital-gains loophole that benefits hedgefunders, of the type that hired John Edwards.

Meanwhile, journalists have made the same point as Franc. This is the *Wall Street Journal*, from Nov. 16: “Affluent Voters Switch Brands/Stands on ‘So-Called Moral Issues’ Prove Costly for Republicans.” And here's a headline from The Huffington Post—speaking of rich-Republicans-turned-rich-Democrats—from Nov. 25: “Fortune 500 CEOs Favor Dems: Gobs Of Green Go To Blue Candidates.” Indeed, in their unguarded moments, even partisan Democrats

seem giddy with their guilt; I found this Aug. 21 headline, “Democrats Outraise Republicans 2-to-1” on the website of the Democratic National Committee.

Of course, it can't really be said that the Democrats are the party of the richest of the rich—because they have the poorest of the poor, too. From East LA to the Rio Grande Valley to the Deep South, donkeys rule.

So that's the dual reality: the Democrats are safe in Manhattan and Beverly Hills, but they also rule among the poor. Look at Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton—they themselves are poor, right?

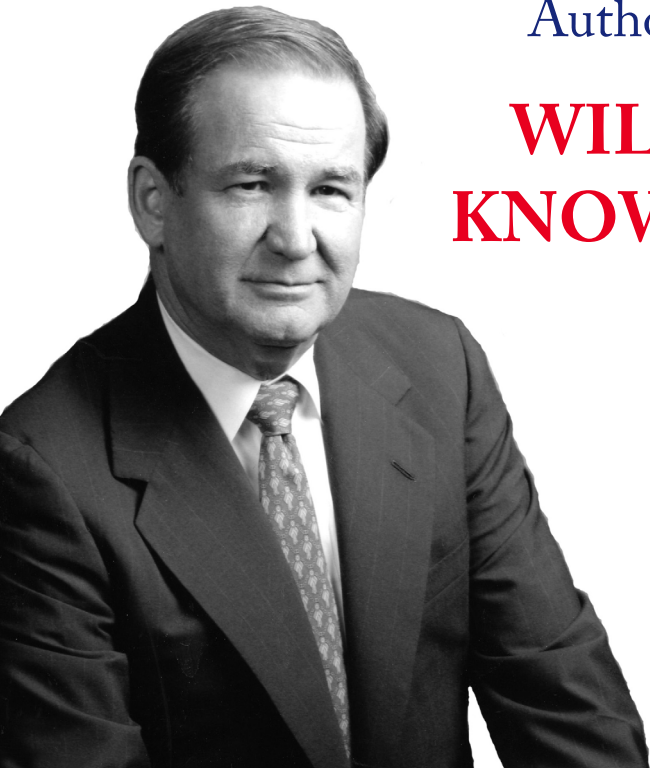
So what, pray tell, do Barbra Streisand and Charlie Rangel actually agree on? Probably only this: the Americans in between them, the Middle Americans, are the common enemy. By this reckoning, small towns and suburbia are subtly racist—except when they are overtly racist—toward people of color. And everybody on the port side of politics knows that “family values” is thinly disguised code for sexual repression and homophobia.

In fact, the normal, historic pattern of small “d” democratic politics is for the very rich and the very poor to ally themselves against the bourgeoisie. The poor look up at the working stiff of a foreman and see the hated Simon Legree. The rich look down the social ladder and see nothing but Babbitts and other small-minded reactionaries, who might well be pro-life.

For their part, the Republicans might as well get used to their new status as the middle-class party. Being the party of the rich is good for fundraising, being the party of the poor is good for invoking moral authority—plus provoking the occasional riot—but being the party of the Silent Majority is the best for winning elections. ■

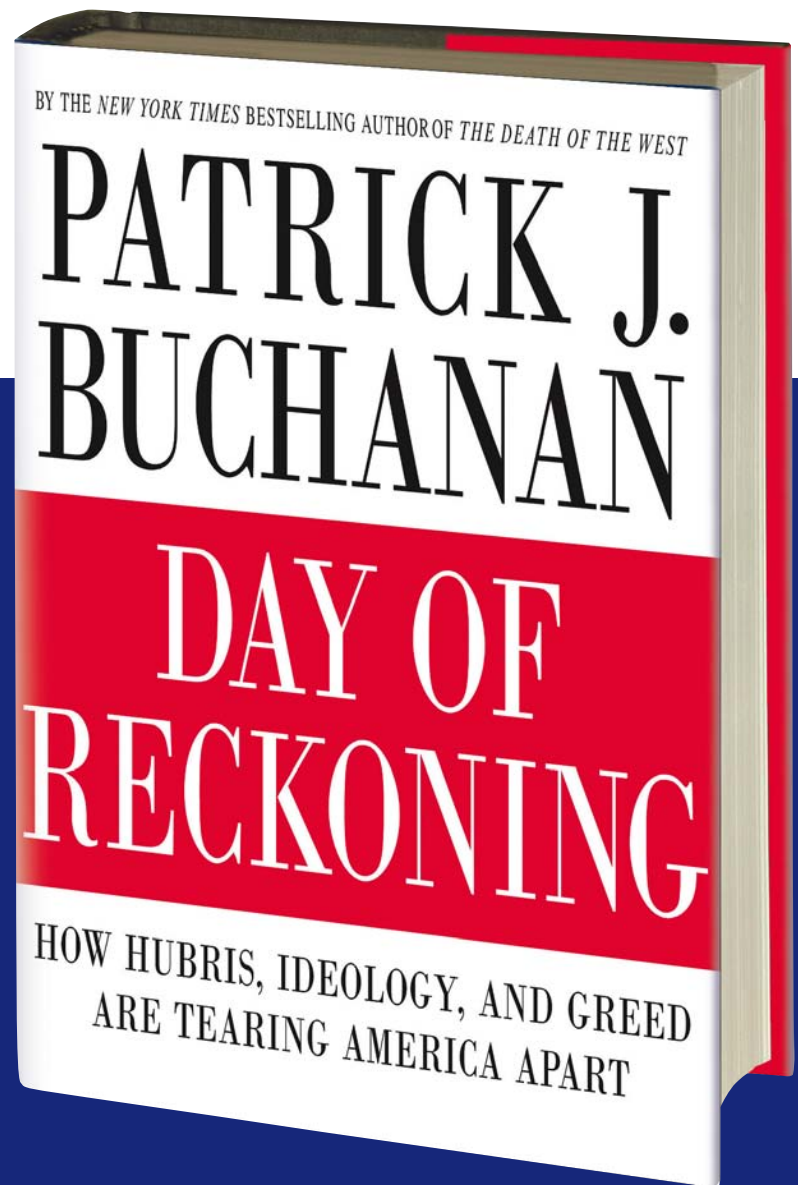
PAT BUCHANAN, *New York Times* Bestselling
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